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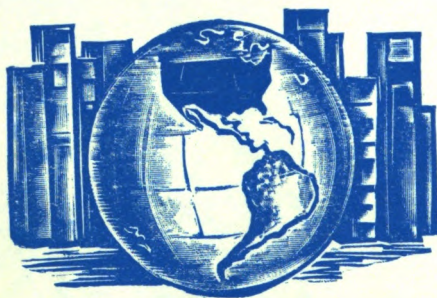
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# FOUR-OAKS:

A Novel.

BY KAMBA THORPE.



NEW YORK:  
*GEO. W. CARLETON & CO., Publishers.*  
LONDON: S. LOW, SON & CO.  
MDCCLXVII.

Bancroft

812B4143  
Q5

Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1867, by  
**G. W. CARLETON & CO.,**  
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New  
York.

22961

**J. E. FARWELL & Co.,**  
Stereotypers and Printers,  
87 Congress Street,  
Boston.

2296 F 4-23-56 MS

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# FOUR-OAKS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### NETHERFORD.



THE town of Netherford stands upon the western bank of the Ominihaw, a little stream which is here called a river, although its shallow waters can float no other craft than the schoolboy's batteau. The houses are scattered over a wide extent of broken ground, and the crooked and narrow streets wander over little hills, and down sandy hollows, until they are lost in the roads and paths leading into the country beyond. Though the Great Central Railroad passes through the town, it has added nothing to its importance, and Netherford still derives, as in days of yore, its chief distinction from Kenby College, an institution more appreciated abroad than at home.

There is but one wide street in this unique little town, called the Mainway. The walk on either side is so much higher than the street itself that steps have been cut into the banks, for the purposes of ascent and descent, and these walks are called the Terraces. Here, beneath the trees, are scattered at intervals, inviting seats that are seldom without occupants when the weather is fine; for the Mainway is the chief resort for drives and promenades.

On the northern side of the Mainway, just where town and country meet, stands an old brick house, which at the time whereof I write had been deserted for many years. It is isolated from all other dwellings by a wood on the one

side, and an old field on the other, bare of trees and over-run with grass. Of the group of grand old trees from which the place took its name of Four-Oaks, but three remain, the fourth is nothing now but a decaying stump. These trees stand so near the house that their boughs may be reached from the upper windows, looking southward. So high is the hill upon which the old house is built, the town almost seems to lie in a valley, and from any point in the grounds a wide view of the surrounding country may be obtained. Here lived and died Anthony Fletcher. The people of Netherford knew but little of his history; he came among them a stranger, and lived among them a stranger. The only relative he was known to have in this country was a nephew of the same name, who visited him a few years before his death, was with him in his last hours, but had never returned to Netherford, though more than twenty years had passed.

There is an old tomb in the garden where Anthony Fletcher lies buried, but his name is otherwise perpetuated in Netherford, by the great bell of St. Botolf's, which was his gift. The sexton of St. Botolf's was once the gardener of Four-Oaks, and from him the bell received the name of Lonely Tony, a quaint tribute to the memory of his former master. Superstition had invested Four-Oaks with ghostly terrors, and the children of Netherford have a fancy that Lonely Tony is a prisoner in the church tower, living on the pigeons that build in the belfry, and suffering untold tortures at the hands of his jailor, Nick Bayne, the sexton.

Fanning Avenue begins at the corner, where stands the church of St. Botolf, and leads between overarching trees to a stately edifice fronting the south. Here in the days gone by lived Jacob Fanning, a man of wealth and family. Besides silver and gold, seven fair daughters and two goodly sons were his portion. He it was who planted the trees which shade the Avenue, and he it was who raised the sidewalk of his Avenue in imitation of the Terraces on the Mainway. The walk on the right of the house was preferred by the family; there are houses looking upon the other walk, but this one runs by that old field which extends from the garden walls of Four-Oaks as far as Fanning Avenue, and is separated from it by a hedge of the Cherokee rose. It is the more picturesque of the two, and inasmuch as the Fannings were great church-goers, and this way led directly to

the door of St. Botolf's, it was the more convenient. Yet was slander loth to admit so simple a reason for a preference so plainly manifested, and some malicious wit gave to the walk the name of the Confessional, because it had been reported that when any one of the Misses Fanning desired to bring a tardy suitor to the point, she took him to walk by moonlight in the fatal path which led so straight to the church-door! Such a terminus was undoubtedly a strong practical hint, and tradition declares, that in the days when the seven daughters of the House of Fanning were young enchantresses, they owed more than one wealthy match to its potent influence. Be that as it may, they all married, save one who died young, and the house became by purchase the property of the elder brother, Mr. John Fanning.

Mrs. John Fanning was a person of much greater importance in Netherford than her husband. She had been a belle in her youth, and was still a handsome woman. She had no children, but Mr. Fanning had many nieces in whose welfare she took an absorbing interest, which had kept her occupied for several years past in matrimonial speculations. Miss Julia, the last who had left school, was lately married to a wealthy Cuban, and was living in Havana. Thither Mr. and Mrs. Fanning had gone to pass the winter of 1854. There remained one other niece for Mrs. Fanning to dispose of, but she was at school at this time. While Mr. and Mrs. Fanning were in Havana, however, a fever broke out in the school where Miss Harry Vane was completing her education, and Mme. Camballat was compelled to send her pupils home. This happened in February, and as Miss Vane did not find it expedient to go to Cuba, she decided to pass the interval of her aunt's absence with the Poinsett family, the only relatives she had in Netherford except the Fannings. As Mr. Poinsett was one of her guardians this seemed the most natural and desirable step she could take, although she was an utter stranger to them all.

Mr. Poinsett's family was large, and his house on the Mainway could not conveniently accommodate visitors. Perhaps it was for this reason that Mrs. Poinsett did not look forward with particular pleasure to Miss Vane's arrival, which had been announced by letter. Moreover she had entertained for years a prejudice against this young lady as her husband's ward; a prejudice which was fostered by her husband's sister, Miss Edna Poinsett, a lady of great pre-



tensions, who having undertaken the education of Miss Blanche Poinsett, was violently opposed to boarding-schools, and fearful of exposing her niece to the pernicious influence of a boarding-school girl. Blanche had a brother older than herself, a student of Kenby College, and several younger ones, violent rebels against Miss Edna's authority.

Miss Theresa Hamilton, Mrs. Poinsett's sister, was also an inmate of this family; a gentle, retiring lady, who, unconsciously to herself, possessed more influence in the house than any one else. To her Mrs. Poinsett always went in her perplexities, and although at first provoked to find that Miss Theresa did not sympathize with her unreasonable dread of Miss Vane's visit, she was finally soothed into something like resignation, and awaited her guest's arrival with admirable equanimity.

Harriet Vane, or Harry, as she was commonly called, was the only child of Mr. Fanning's youngest sister, a beautiful, wild and eccentric girl, who ran away with Mr. Vane, a gentleman to whom none of her family ever made the slightest objection, simply because she wished to avoid the ostentatious celebrations which always attended the weddings of the Fannings. She never saw Netherford again. She died when Harry was a few years old, and leaving his daughter to the ruinous love and care of her grandmother Vane, Mr. Vane went abroad for his health.

Harry for six or seven years did just as she pleased; ran about bare-footed and bare-headed, climbed trees for birds'-nests, rode in the wagon, waded in the brook, and not only ruled her too indulgent grandmother, but all her grandmother's household. Her father coming home once after a three years absence, shocked to find that Harry was as wilful, ignorant, and wild at ten as she had been at seven, in spite of tears and entreaties on the part of grandmother and granddaughter, sent her off to Mme. Camballat's French boarding-school for young ladies. Here, for some weeks, Harry was as miserable as it was possible to be. She missed the fresh air of the fields, the shady trees, the songs of birds; in short, everything that had made her whole happiness at home. But this state of mind was too unnatural to one of her temperament to last longer than a few weeks. She found plenty of little prisoners of her own age with whom she could be very happy in play hours in the con-

tracted little garden belonging to the school. She was so very backward in her studies that at first it was with the greatest difficulty that she could keep up with her classes, but a foothold once obtained, to use her own expression, she "did as well as the rest." Study for its own sake, however, she never learned to love; and music, of which she was passionately fond, and French, which was the language of the school, were the only branches in which she distinguished herself. She had been at school a year or two, passing the intervening vacations with her grandmother, when her father died.

Mr. Vane had always thought Mr. Fanning a somewhat visionary character, upon whose business capacity he could place very little reliance. Unwilling to give him the sole management of his daughter's inheritance, he constituted him joint guardian with Mr. Poinsett, an old friend, and a distant relation. Harry was left to her grandmother during the old lady's lifetime, and to Mrs. Fanning thereafter. This arrangement suited all parties except Mrs. Poinsett. Mr. Poinsett was an indolent man, and left the management of his ward's property entirely to Mr. Fanning, who loved to have his hands full of such business; Mrs. Vane thought she might live a long time, and at least she was sure of Harry as long as she did live; Mrs. Fanning was sure that Mrs. Vane would die by the time Harry should have finished school, and she did not care about having her before that time. Mrs. Vane died, however, before Harry left school, and her two last vacations were spent with her aunt at Bathen, on the sea-shore, Mrs. Fanning always stopping for her at Mme. Camballat's, on the route; thus it happened that Harry had never been in Netherford.

Poor Mrs. Poinsett alone found fault; her husband's ward was the skeleton in her closet. From the first she was sure that she would bring them trouble; Mr. Fanning would mismanage the business, and Mr. Poinsett would be blamed; but the annoyance of having Miss Vane to dwell with her was something to which she had never looked forward. Too much absorbed in household affairs to care for society, she was afflicted with a kind of terror at the prospect of having to entertain a young lady trained under the auspices of the fashionable Mrs. Fanning. But it was some consolation to her that Mr. Poinsett was not obliged to go

for Miss Vane, as Dr. Innibee had offered to take her under his care when he returned from the city.

The day was chill and rainy when Miss Vane arrived, an unwelcome guest, at her guardian's house. In her simplicity she supposed they would be very happy to receive her, and she was somewhat embarrassed to find no one to meet her. She took leave of Dr. Innibee at the gate, and felt rather lonely while she waited on the porch for admittance. To do Mrs. Poinsett justice she had not intended such marked neglect. The train had come in much earlier than usual, and she was quite unprepared for company — for in this light she was determined to consider Miss Vane. She kept the young lady waiting long in the cheerless parlor, while she arranged a toilette elaborate enough for Mrs. Fanning's niece. Harry, who had expected to be received with more warmth, became alarmed at this formality, and began to regard her visit with quite as much apprehension as Mrs. Poinsett. She was disappointed in Mrs. Poinsett's appearance, when at length she entered the room, while that lady was much surprised to find that the school-girl she so dreaded to see looked scarcely older than Blanche, who was fifteen, and by no means so tall. Much as she was prejudiced, she admitted that Miss Vane was very pretty, and really engaging, and she secretly hoped that Miss Blanche would improve by the association.

Harry was conducted to her room while a distant hubbub raged among those unruly boys of the Poinsett household, whose name was a proverb in the community. Chilled by her formal reception, she thought with dismay of the long days she must pass before her aunt returned, and longed with a feeling of homesickness to be back once more at school.

At dinner she met the various members of the family. Miss Edna was freezingly polite, Miss Theresa kind, but timid; Richard and Blanche unconquerably shy; the younger children, of whom there were four, talking in subdued whispers, which Mrs. Poinsett did not check, being too busily occupied by the duties of her table. Mr. Poinsett did not appear until the dessert was brought, and to Harry's intense relief contributed, in some degree, to break up the stiffness of this ungenial company.

The rain fell unremittingly for many days, and Harry was kept a close prisoner within doors pining for the sunshine.

The only idler in that busy household, she spent the dreary hours at her window, gazing at Fanning House, and weaving most glorious visions of a happy time to come, or wondering who lived in the brick house standing alone upon the hill.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE TWO FRIENDS.



MISS VANE was not the only person in Netherford anxiously awaiting fair weather. Mrs. Fanning had many friends eager to render attentions to her niece, and ere the rain was well over, Harry was summoned to the stiff and formal parlor by a card bearing the inscription, "The Misses Innibee," and another with the name of "Mr. Paul Innibee."

The Misses Innibee were three in number, with a difference of some years in their ages. Each was celebrated in Netherford as excelling in some peculiar forte. Miss Susan, the eldest, was much past the season of youth, with a generally faded out appearance, and a mild expression of countenance. She excelled in housekeeping, and was famous for her thousand and one infallible receipts.

Miss Emily was dark-eyed, plump, rosy and pretty. Her life was devoted to painting, or as she expressed it, to art; and the productions of her pencil or brush adorned her father's walls, and crowded the portfolios of her friends.

Miss Grace, the youngest, doted on music, and according to the opinion of Netherford, was a syren of song. She was slender and fair, with a "*nez détroussé*," as she was accustomed to call that conspicuous feature; for Miss Grace was fond of displaying her ignorance of French.

Mr. Paul, as he was familiarly called, was an only son, younger than Miss Emily, and older than Miss Grace. His family thought him a genius, and he knew not what to think of himself. He had arrived at the age of twenty-six without being able to decide in what walk he should immor-

talize the name of Innibee. He united the accomplishments of his three sisters, and added thereto a fourth entirely his own. Some thought he excelled Miss Susan in making salads; his friends could not decide if he or Miss Emily knew the better; and if Miss Grace sang like an angel, he played the flute with wonderful skill. Moreover he was a poet! He had published one book of sonnets, and frequently wrote verses for the Netherford Chronicle over the signature of Tristus.

When Miss Vane reached the parlor, she found Miss Susan discussing with Mrs. Poinsett, the best method of cultivating celery; Miss Emily talking about high-art with Miss Theresa, and so, the introductions being over, she sat down to entertain, and be entertained by Miss Grace and Mr. Paul.

"How do you like Netherford, Miss Vane?" Mr. Paul asked, not having ingenuity or originality enough to avoid so common-place a query.

Harry was rather inclined to think she did not like Netherford at all, but as her experience of the town was confined to one house, she evasively replied that she had been in Netherford so short a time she could not tell.

"Oh! but we will make you like it, just see if we do not!" said Miss Grace; and then she launched forth upon the delights of her native town; its beautiful walks, its literary society, the Quodlibet, as it was called, the college and the church, &c., and finished by asking Harry if she had seen the Netherford Chronicle of the past week.

"No," said Miss Vane; she had not heard of such a paper.

"Oh! dear, yes!" said Miss Grace; "we have an excellent paper, and original poetry in it too. Are you fond of poetry, Miss Vane?"

"Not particularly," said Harry, ignorant of the fact that she was in the presence of a poet.

"What is that Miss Vane is saying?" asked Miss Emily from the other side of the room, "You do not like poetry Miss Vane? That is incomprehensible. Paul you must convert her."

Mr. Paul had the grace to blush when his divine gift was so publicly alluded to, and Miss Grace informed Harry in a rather loud whisper that her brother was *quite* a poet.

"Oh!" said Harry, I never saw one before, perhaps that is why I never cared for poetry."

The volatile Miss Grace was now attracted by something passing in the street, and springing to the window she exclaimed,

"If I may believe my eyes there is Mr. Kennett! What splendid horses! And Mr. Brittain in the buggy with him. What cronies they are, to be sure!"

"Who are they," said Harry.

"Oh, Miss Vane, great catches, both of them," said Miss Emily.

"It always seemed so strange to me," said Miss Grace, turning to Miss Theresa, "the friendship between those two. Mr. Brittain is so much older and graver than Mr. Kennett."

"Very little older," said Miss Theresa; "they were old friends in boyhood."

"Yes," said Miss Grace, "I suppose there is but little difference in their ages. They were class-mates they say, in college, but Mr. Brittain is such an old sober-sides. He is a kind of young old bachelor, Miss Vane, a professor in Kenby, very learned, but very reserved. It really is a *lusion natura* to see him in company with a lady, a *phenomena* to find him at a party. I am afraid you might stay in Netherford ten years without making his acquaintance."

"I should not regret it," replied Harry, laughing; "I do not like professors."

"You do not?" said Miss Grace. "I warn you not to let Mrs. Brittain hear you say that, nor for that matter, the contrary, either," added she, with an unlady-like wink at Miss Theresa.

"Why," asked Harry, "is his mother so proud of him?"

"Proud? oh dear, yes! and precious of him too," laughed Miss Grace. "They do say," she continued, "that Mrs. Brittain is right well off; but to my certain knowledge there has not been a stick of new furniture—no, not so much as a carpet or a chair in that house these five years;—though Selina Dalrymple, who has an uncle in China, does say that Mrs. Brittain's brother who died there, left her a fortune."

"Oh! well Grace," said Miss Susan, "I dare say that was exaggerated."

"I know nothing about it," said Miss Grace. "All I know is that I like Mr. Kennett best. There is no doubt

about *his* being rich. He had a rich old kinsman who left him I don't know how much money, Miss Vane, and he has travelled — though Mr Brittain has travelled too. Still Mr. Kennett makes more show for it. He and his sister were poor orphans, brought up by their aunt, Mrs. Marshall, who keeps a students' boarding-house down there on College Row. His sister is now the rich Mrs. Dean, a particular favorite of your aunt, Miss Vane, and Mr. Kennett is the greatest catch in the country. I wonder he has never tried to marry, though people say he is a great flirt."

"He is very kind to his old aunt who took care of him when he was a boy," said Miss Theresa.

"Oh! he is famous for it," said Miss Grace. "And I wonder what he can see in her, she is so common, so unpolished."

"She is an excellent person," said Miss Theresa.

"Ah! Miss Theresa, you always say something kind. To be sure it is very good, and all that, in Mr. Kennett, only some think it a kind of affectation in him. But I dare say he does more than he would to make up for his sister's neglect. They say Mrs. Dean will hardly look at Mrs. Marshall now. But then only think, Miss Theresa, Mr. Kennett wanted Mrs. Marshall to live with him at Tanglewood. Mrs. Dean, they say, was very angry, and Mrs. Marshall sent her word not to fret, for she had never eaten the bread of dependence in her life, and never meant to. Mr. Kennett goes to church with her, for all she is such an old-fashioned figure. She has never had any other dress than that old gray brocade since I can remember. And every body knows she is never seen without that everlasting fan and bead bag."

"There Grace, that will do," said Miss Emily, rising, "you never know when to stop. Miss Harry *do* come round *soon*. Papa is quite taken with you, and is anxious to have you to tea. When can you come?"

"Yes, when can you come?" chimed in Miss Susan. "Next Thursday? I shall not invite many, as it is Lent, you know. Paul will call for you."

So it was decided that Miss Vane should go to tea at the Innibeas on Thursday, and her visitors withdrew.

To the Innibeas Harry went on the appointed evening, and enjoyed herself exceedingly. The guests were few, and not remarkable for brilliancy it is true; but brilliant

would be the dullest party compared with an evening at the Poinsetts.

This was the beginning of Miss Vane's acquaintance with Netherford, and from this day forward time flew by on noiseless wings. Visitors, notes, music and flowers for Miss Vane constantly arrived, and Mrs. Poinsett fretfully declared that her house-boy could not half attend to his work for "that everlasting bell." Now and then a mother called with her daughter, and the family shared the honor of the visit with Harry; but generally her visitors were of a class of young ladies, not old enough to appreciate Miss Edna or Miss Theresa, and not young enough for Blanche. Or gentlemen who had long since forgotten the elder ladies, and had not yet begun to think of the younger.

Harry was fast becoming a belle. Mr. Paul wrote sonnets for her, and sent her flowers; Mr. Sutton invited her to ride, sang duets with her and sent her music. Many of the college youths, attracted by the very pretty face they had seen at church, called in all the glory of patent-leather, remarkable cravats and very new gloves, to talk with Miss Harry about "moonlight, music, love and flowers." And occasionally the very quiet family with whom she dwelt were roused from their midnight slumbers by the College Band serenading Miss Vane. But the two friends about whom Miss Grace Innibee had gossiped so unreservedly had not yet appeared among the admirers of the new belle.

"I cannot imagine," Miss Grace would say, "what has become of Mr. Kennett. They say his sister is sick, and that he stays with her all the time but I cannot see the sense of that. And they do say, too, that there is a young lady staying with Mrs. Dean. She must be very charming to keep Ralph Kennett so close. As to Mr. Brittain, my dear, do not expect to be acquainted with him."

Harry did not pine for the acquaintance of either. She had found plenty of new friends with whom she enjoyed herself. Blanche Poinsett, riding by in her father's crowded carriage, when she saw Harry on the Terrace so happy and so gay in a crowd of young people, could not refrain from expressing a wish that she were a young lady, and as pretty as Miss Vane, — a remark which called forth a severe rebuke from Miss Edna, who was always reminding Blanche that Miss Vane's money made her so attractive, and beauty



was a fading flower. And then would follow a long dissertation upon the treasures of the mind, and the beauty of the intellect. For Harry was not popular with the Poinsett family; she found herself at the end of a month as much an alien as at first. No restrictions were ever put upon her actions by any one. She was at liberty to come and go when she pleased. Mr. Poinsett was always very happy to hear that she was enjoying herself, and though Mrs. Poinsett might sometimes disapprove of some of her proceedings, she thought she did all that could be expected of her when she kept a fire in the parlor, and gave up that room to Miss Vane and her visitors. But Harry was by no means so unmolested in the parlor as Mrs. Poinsett imagined. Indeed, with four bad little boys in the house, how was that possible? The youngest had a pet kitten subject to fits; an ugly, sickly, yellow, diminutive kitten, Davy's darling and pride, but the execration of the rest of the household, and the source of continual wrangling between the brothers. Harry was continually annoyed by their noise in the hall, while she entertained her company in the parlor. Nor was this all; Master Jack Poinsett, who had the reputation of being the worst boy in Netherford, would not unfrequently embarrass Harry by coming into the room, and entering into conversation with the gentlemen; and once he even threw Davy's kitten quite unexpectedly into Mr. Sutton's arms, for which that gentleman would probably have bestowed upon him the punishment he deserved, could he have caught him.

And yet, despite all this, there were times when Harry found these boys very agreeable company. She would bribe them to good behavior by the promise of a fairy tale, and they in return gave her much marvellous information in regard to haunted Four-Oaks and Lonely Tony.

She had but one cause for real uneasiness, and that was the want of a letter from Mrs. Fanning. Her Aunt's silence did indeed mar her gayety in no small degree. As the days went by and no letter came for her, she began to entertain very gloomy forebodings. She was not content with visions of death and sickness, to which her uncle and aunt were liable in common with all mortals, but she even absurdly fancied that they had forgotten her. A groundless fear, for they were both fond and proud of Harry.

## CHAPTER III.

## MRS. BRITAIN'S FOREBODINGS.



HARRY had written promptly on the breaking up of the school, and Mrs. Fanning had as promptly replied; but her letter was delayed, missent from post to post, and was long out of date when at length it reached Harry's impatient hands. She had not read two lines before she was laughing at herself for supposing her aunt could forget her.

Mrs. Fanning was enraptured with Havana, and covered several pages with enthusiastic praise of the "*siempre fidelissima isla de Cuba*," all of which Harry read rather hurriedly; she was more eager to know when her aunt expected to return home. The gorgeous description of the tropical island was quite forgotten in the perusal of the last two pages, for there Harry found condensed some instructions which were far from agreeable.

"Do you meet a Mr. Sutton?" wrote Mrs. Fanning. "He is quite a judge of music, so do your best for him, as your musical reputation will greatly depend upon his opinion. Your uncle has also a particular favorite and friend, Mr. Brittain. He is a professor, of I have forgotten what, in Kenby College, and is quite learned and talented, I believe. He is, however, so wrapped up in his books that it is hardly probable you will meet him. *If* you should, however, I could wish you to bear in mind that he is not to be entertained by that frivolous order of conversation that is usually indulged in by very young people. I mention this because I think it necessary, in order to succeed in society, to know how to adapt one's self to all manner of people; it is a lesson one cannot begin to learn too early. Mrs. Dean's brother, Mr. Kennett, I would also recommend to your good graces; and of course you have already formed the acquaintance of "our poet," Mr. Paul Innibee. You may tell me what you think of him when you see me.

"Your uncle is going to send some Spanish books to Mr. Brittain, who is quite a proficient in that beautiful language. I really wish, Harry, you would study it; I dare say Mr. Brittain would consent to teach you, and you would find it such an advantage if you should visit your cousin Julia next winter. I shall never cease to regret that I did not take you from school and bring you with me; I fear you will not have a pleasant time at the Poinsetts. We are going to pass the summer at Myrtle Springs, as dear old Bathen is now out of vogue. But I shall first go to Louisiana, to visit some relatives I am most anxious to see, and therefore we shall not return to Netherford until the autumn. But you must meet us at Myrtle Springs. Louisa Dean will, I know, be delighted to take you in charge. I shall write her about it, but you can mention it to her yourself, for of course you have seen her by this time.

"And now, my dear child, I feel constrained before I close, to give you a little wholesome advice. I know that you are very young, but I trust you will endeavor to conduct yourself discreetly, and above all, do not suffer yourself to be entangled in any silly flirtation. Nothing can be more injurious to a young lady's prospects."

"Oh, dear me!" thought Harry, as she read this last admonition, "then I certainly shall not study Spanish, or I might be tempted to flirt with the Professor."

She looked over the letter again, in order to read what was said about Myrtle Springs, and once more she glanced over her aunt's final warning, laughed a little, then frowned, and leaning her head upon her hand, fell into a reverie which did not afford her much pleasure. Suddenly she started up, rushed to her writing-desk, unlocked it, and began gathering together a number of little notes written in a flourishing hand. She would not stay to read them over, but tore them impetuously into very tiny fragments, and threw them upon the hearth.

"There!" she murmured, "would they call that a flirtation? But I never answered one of them, and how could I help it, if he would write to me?"

Then, as there was no fire, she lighted a taper, and proceeded to burn this little record of nonsense.

While Harry was thus occupied, Miss Theresa received an entreaty from Mrs. Brittain to come to her with all pos-

sible speed. There were many who depended upon Miss Theresa for counsel and sympathy and consolation, and Mrs. Brittain more than all others. They had been friends for many years, and Miss Theresa, though the younger, had always proved an unflinching support in the hour of trial. A short walk along the Terrace soon brought her to an irregular brown house, the dwelling of her friend. Mrs. Brittain had never affected flower-culture. She would not have exchanged her grass and trees for all the flower-beds in Netherford.

Miss Theresa found the mother of the Professor in her neat little sitting-room, knitting desperately as she rocked in her great arm-chair before a cheerful fire. She was a fine-looking, elderly lady, but just at present did not wear a very engaging expression.

“Oh! Theresa,” she cried, as that lady entered, “I am so glad you are come! I never wanted to see you so badly before.” And then she burst into tears.

Miss Theresa was accustomed to this—she was not alarmed, and she simply asked,

“What is the matter?”

“Oh Theresa! Sylvo! Sylvo!” sobbed Mrs. Brittain. Mr. Sylvester Brittain was almost a miracle of perfection in his mother’s sight. A good son, a good friend, an excellent person in every respect; yet despite all these merits, he was to her a source of constant misery and anxiety. The phantoms she had conjured up to chase her son to destruction, were so familiar to Miss Theresa that they had lost all terror for her. From the day her idol had learned to fire a gun, and his mother had fretted herself into a fever at the fear that he would some day be brought home to her with his brains blown out, up to the present moment when she conceived an aversion for every girl to whom he rendered the slightest civility, fancying she was laying a plot for his hand and heart, Miss Theresa had been the confidant of all the impossible calamities, which poor Mrs. Brittain, like a vengeful fury, was ready to heap upon the head of her devoted son.

“Is Sylvester sick?” asked Miss Theresa, for form’s sake. She believed him to be perfectly well.

“No, no. But that designing woman! Oh! it is a hard thing that there are people who will interfere with other people’s sons. I never interfere with any one’s daughters, why will they not leave my son alone?”

"What has happened?" asked Miss Theresa.

"Oh, Theresa! that Mrs. Fanning is the most artful woman! Sometime ago there came a box of Spanish books from Mr. Fanning; I know she made him send them. And now to-day, here comes a letter from her, a very pleasant letter, for the woman can write, — you see I am not prejudiced Theresa, — and she wants him to translate some Spanish book or other; and more than that, she hints to him about giving this Miss Vane lessons in Spanish. It is alarming!"

Miss Theresa did not entertain Mrs. Brittain's prejudices against Mrs. Fanning. She readily divined that the letter was written simply because Mrs. Fanning liked to cultivate people of talent; but she was a little surprised at the proposal for Miss Vane to learn Spanish. Still she did not believe that there was any design to entrap Mr. Brittain, and she quietly remarked that Miss Vane was a mere child.

"A mere child, indeed! She is Mrs. Fanning's niece, and that is sufficient. I know very well that if Mrs. Fanning has determined to have any one there is very little use in struggling against her. But I have one ray of comfort; Sylvio says he cannot undertake to teach a frivolous young lady like Miss Vane. Fortunately, he seems to understand her character."

"Regina!" said Miss Theresa, smiling, "do you mean that you wish Sylvester never to marry?"

"Oh, that is not so, Theresa. Of course I wish to see him happy; but I do not choose that others shall select a wife for him. Only show me the girl worthy of him, and if I make a single objection you may tell me of it."

"Where will you find such an one?" said Miss Theresa, smiling.

Mrs. Brittain sighed and shook her head. "Ah, me!" she said, "sometimes I wish he would give up the college. I own I was disappointed at first, that brother Louis did not leave a great fortune, but now I am glad. I know if he were rich those Innibee girls would try to attract him. I have enough to enable me to live respectably, without being a burden to Sylvio. I cannot bear Grace Innibee."

"Miss Vane is superior to her in every way," said Miss Theresa.

"Theresa do not take Mrs. Fanning's part against me," said Mrs. Brittain peevishly.

"Not at all," said Miss Theresa, with perfect good humor; "but I dislike to see you make yourself so unreasonably miserable. Besides, it is not kind to cherish such a prejudice against this young lady who is perfectly innocent of any designs upon Sylvester. She is really a very pleasant girl; will you not come to see her?"

"Theresa," said Mrs. Brittain, indignantly, "you ask me to put my hand in the very fire threatening to devour me? No, indeed! I will not encourage Mrs. Fanning, by going to see Miss Vane."

It was useless to argue the point. Mrs. Brittain could be soothed, but it was not possible to convince her, and Miss Theresa left her, still firmly satisfied that Mrs. Fanning wished to entrap her son.

Near her brother's gate, Miss Theresa encountered Mr. Brittain, and while they were speaking, Mr. Sutton and Mr. Paul ascended the steps of the Terrace and greeted them gaily.

"Ah, Professor, how do you do?" said Mr. Sutton. "Going to call on the new beauty, eh? Miss Theresa basks in the sunshine of her presence every day. How I envy her!"

"Do you mean Miss Vane?" asked Mr. Brittain.

"Yes," said Miss Theresa, and added with some embarrassment, "Will you not come in?"

"Thank you," said he, "not now," and blushed like a schoolboy. He had intended calling on Miss Vane, but he did not care to call in company with Mr. Sutton and Mr. Paul.

"I was thinking," said Mr. Sutton, as Mr. Brittain walked away, "if his mother would approve."

"Poor fellow!" said Mr. Paul, "I am afraid he is a doomed old bachelor."

"So much the better for us," said Mr. Sutton, "he will not be in our way."

Miss Theresa did not hear all this; she had entered the house in order to apprise Harry of her visitors.

"It is very good of me," Paul, Mr. Sutton said, while they waited in the parlor, "It is very good-natured of me to let you come with me; you will be sadly in my way. Upon my word, I am afraid I shall stand a very poor chance with you in the field."

Mr. Sutton had no such fear; never was a man blest with a more comfortable opinion of himself.

"Ah! Mr. Sutton and Mr. Paul, how glad I am to see you," said Harry, gaily, as she entered.

"You must add 'both,' Miss Harry, or we shall fear you mean to exclude one of us," said Mr. Sutton.

"Oh both, of course," said Miss Harry, "the more the merrier."

"The more the merrier, eh? Then it is a great pity the Professor did not come in, eh? Paul?"

"What Professor?" said Harry.

"Why, *the* Professor, *par excellences*; Professor Brittain. We met him at the gate with Miss Theresa, but he would not come in, not he. You ought to have seen him, Miss Harry, how bashful he was. I shrewdly suspect the dutiful gentleman could not come without mamma's permission."

"Yes," said Mr. Paul, "I should not be surprised to see him at any moment, dropping in; it is but a little way to his house, and he has had time to go home and ask, and come back."

"Perhaps his mother will not give him leave, though," said Harry, "you represent her as such a tyrannical dame."

"I assure you, I have the highest respect for Mrs. Brittain," said Mr. Sutton with mock gravity. "But," he added, "if I were a young lady, I would not like to be her daughter-in-law."

"As I have not the slightest expectation of being her daughter-in-law," said Harry, "I think it quite unnecessary to say so much about poor Mrs. Brittain."

"By Jove!" cried Mr. Sutton, who always swore by the heathen deities in the presence of ladies, "there is the venerable gentleman now! He has been home and got leave, and here he comes up the walk." And sure enough the bell rang, and Sam ushered in Mr. Brittain.

Harry had never had an opportunity of seeing him before, except at such a distance that it was hardly possible to distinguish him from others. She had always associated gray hair, baldness and spectacles with the title of Professor, and she was somewhat surprised to see a gentleman guiltless of either one of these indispensable accompaniments of that dignity. His eyes were large, a very dark blue, and very beautiful; his hair a light brown, and very thick; his form tall and slender. His dress was somewhat

careless, but perfectly neat. Harry looked at him, and thought him rather ugly. As far as features were concerned he certainly was not handsome; his nose was large and his mouth heavy; but he had a fine head, and this Harry, who was a closer observer than she appeared to be, soon discovered.

Mr. Sutton, who had faultlessly regular features, and dressed exquisitely, was in the habit of saying that Mr. Brittain did well not to frequent ladies' society, he was so unfortunately ugly. But Mr. Sutton, learned as he supposed himself in the female heart, did not seem to be aware that, though beauty of person may be the first thing women are attracted by, it is, perhaps, the last by which they are impressed. Men may marry for beauty alone, but women seldom do.

Mr. Brittain was somewhat shy in the presence of ladies, but he was neither awkward nor undignified. He looked upon Harry rather as a child, and walking up to her without waiting for an introduction, he held out his hand and said,

"Miss Vane I am so much indebted to your uncle for the books he has sent me, you must permit me to express my sense of his kindness to you, since he is not here."

"Yes," said Harry, thinking he had come to see about the Spanish, and speaking very quickly, "I have just this morning learned that you are one of my uncle's friends."

"I acknowledge the justice of that reproach," returned he gravely, "but you know I am a man of very little leisure."

"Oh! I did not intend any reproach," said Harry. "I received this morning a letter from my aunt, the first I have had since I came here."

"I suppose Mrs. Fanning will soon return?"

"She will not be in Netherford before Autumn. We will pass the summer at Myrtle Springs. I am going there with Mrs. Dean to meet her."

"Why, Professor, that is your favorite resort. Miss Harry you did not expect to meet such good company, did you?" said Mr. Sutton.

"Do you go there?" said Harry, still in dread of the Spanish. "Is it a pleasant place?"

"Very pleasant," said Mr. Brittain. "At least I fancy you will find it so."



"Mrs. Dean is one of my aunt's friends, but I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting her," said Harry.

"You will have to pardon Mrs. Dean," said Mr. Brittain, kindly. "She has been ill, and is still very feeble."

"Oh! I do not blame her, of course; I had heard that she was ill, and I am sorry. But—" She was about to say, "She might have sent her brother," but she could not finish her sentence.

"But it was unpardonable in Mr. Kennett not to have called. Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Mr. Sutton rudely. "You see, Miss Harry, I can read your thoughts."

"You should not read them aloud then," said Harry with evident annoyance. "And that was not exactly what I thought."

"Oh! never mind, Miss Harry," said Mr. Paul, "when once you are at Fanning House, Mr. Kennett will call. He is a little afraid of Miss Edna."

"I suppose you have seen Fanning House, Miss Vane?" said Mr. Brittain. "I can fancy it would be impossible to wait for Mr. and Mrs. Fanning."

"No, I have not seen it," said Harry. "I have not even been down the Avenue. But the servants have been to see me."

"Not been to Fanning House!" cried Mr. Sutton and Mr. Paul simultaneously. "Oh! you must go! Go with us this afternoon?"

"Yes, do, Miss Harry, do go this afternoon," urged Mr. Paul.

"No," said Harry, "I would rather not."

"Not this evening?" said Mr. Paul.

"No," said Harry, "I do not wish to go there."

"Not wish to go to that paradise of young ladies? Why, pray? It is incomprehensible," said Mr. Sutton.

"Oh! I can see it very well from my window," answered Harry evasively.

"You can not have any unpleasant associations with the place?" said Mr. Paul.

"No, I have no associations with the place. I have never been there; but if you must have my reasons, I do not wish to go there until my uncle and aunt come home and I can go there to live. I do not wish to have my first impressions spoiled. I have always looked forward with such delight to going there to live as a young lady,

and have imagined myself riding up the avenue, and the hall-door opened to me, and the servants who knew my mother whom I cannot remember, crowding to see me, that I am really sorry to have seen them before I go there. I would not go near the house; I will not even look down the avenue when I go to church."

"Well, I declare!" cried Mr. Sutton; "Downright romantic! Ha! ha! ha!"

Harry frowned. She particularly disliked being laughed at. She looked at Mr. Paul, and felt that he was meditating a sonnet. She turned to Mr. Brittain, and thought she saw sympathy in his kind eyes. The flush passed from her face, the frown changed to a smile, and he smiled also, but a very gentle smile, as she afterwards described it; it was not a smile that laughed at her, and she said,

"But there is one house I should like to visit very much, and that is that old brick house they call Four-Oaks.

"And a shocking misnomer," said Mr. Sutton; "there are but three oaks and a stump, a rotten old stump with a hole in the middle, full of water, and two frogs living in it."

"Oh! I wish you would not say such things," said Harry, impatiently, "you put one out so! I heard the other day it was haunted," continued she, addressing herself to Mr. Brittain, "and I have always had a particular desire to meet a ghost."

Mr. Brittain laughed. "I am afraid you will be disappointed; it is certainly desolate and lonely enough for ghosts, but when I went there some years ago, while the place was undergoing repairs, I neither saw nor heard anything supernatural."

"Oh! you cannot have good ears or good eyes," said Harry.

"Ha! ha! ha! ha!" shouted Mr. Sutton, "By Jupiter that is a fling at your age, Professor. Miss Harry I never dreamed you could be so sharp."

"I do not know what you mean," said Harry. "I have said nothing about that?"

"My eyes and ears," said Mr. Brittain, smiling, "were at that time much younger. I think it is fifteen years since I was there."

"And how long had the house been deserted then?" asked Harry, with great interest.

"About four or five years."

"Oh! that was hardly long enough for a ghost to establish himself. Have you never been since? I should think — I know it would be much more interesting to go there now. I am sure one might meet a ghost."

"Possibly, one might," said Mr. Brittain, "provided it were twilight. I have never been in the house since, but in the grounds often; the place has a peculiar charm for me."

Harry would have been pleased to know why, and looked at the Professor with curious interest, hoping to learn what peculiar charm Four-Oaks had for him.

"It is a beautiful situation," said Mr. Paul. "It quite lifts one above the world to stand on that high hill."

"It was a lovely place, I am told," said Mr. Sutton, "when old Anthony was alive to keep it up; but I can't say that I particularly fancy it now."

"Are there any window-seats, Mr. Brittain?" asked Harry. "And dark passages?"

"There are window-seats," said Mr. Brittain, much amused, "and a crooked stair."

"I think I should like to live there; I should like to be a young lady, first at Fanning House, and then live at Four-Oaks."

"Then, Mr. Kennett is your man, Miss Harry," said Mr. Sutton, "he is going to purchase Four-Oaks."

"If I were sure that he would buy Four-Oaks, and this were leap-year," said Harry, merrily.

"*Prenez garde, mademoiselle!* Mr. Brittain is Mr. Kennett's bosom-friend; he will betray you," said Mr. Sutton.

"You may trust me, Miss Vane; I shall not tell him. Fore-warned is fore-armed you know," said Mr. Brittain, with a smile.

"Thank you! But after all I might not like Four-Oaks, and a ghost might become tiresome in time."

"If you would really like to see the place," said Mr. Brittain, "Mr. Kennett —"

"Oh! no, no, no! pray do not say anything to him about it," cried Harry, blushing deeply. "I was more than half in jest. I am dreadfully afraid of ghosts. I should not survive the sight of one, I am sure."

"Yonder comes the Devil!" said Mr. Sutton, as John

thrust in his head at the door and made a face. For once, Harry rejoiced to see the boy she generally considered the bane of her existence, and was ready to bless him for this opportune interruption.

"Yonder comes the Devil, Paul, my boy, and I take it as a sign to make my exit. Ever since that young gentleman threw his bōb-tailed kitten into my arms, I have made it a point to leave when he appears; for I found that angels do not always possess the power of exorcising fiends."

"Miss Vane," said Mr. Brittain, "my mother is an old lady and seldom visits; do not wait for her. I can promise you no ghosts, but our house is as old as Four-Oaks and almost as rambling."

Harry thanked him, without at that moment entertaining the slightest idea of accepting the invitation.

Mrs. Brittain was sitting at her window when her son came home. Her heart instantly took the alarm when she saw, from certain little signs in his dress, that he must have been visiting, and she almost groaned aloud when he said,

"I have been to see Miss Vane. I thought it but proper to go, since her uncle had taken the trouble to procure me the books I wanted. She is quite a pretty little girl, and I am inclined to think very bright. But she is in danger of being spoiled by the company she keeps."

"Did she say anything about the Spanish?" asked Mrs. Brittain, in great trepidation.

"Oh! no, indeed," laughed her son. "She is not thinking of books and study."

Mrs. Brittain was relieved.

Meanwhile Harry, looking out of her window at the ruined garden of Four-Oaks, thought, "I wonder why he likes to walk there? I wonder what is the peculiar charm the place has for him? Perhaps Mr. Fletcher had a beautiful daughter whom he loved. It may be that is why he does not care much for society. But I am *very* glad he said nothing about studying Spanish. I really have no time for it."

## CHAPTER IV.

## AT HAZLEWOOD.



MISS EDNA'S astonishment was excessive when she heard that Harry had received a visit from Mr. Brittain. She had always given him credit for more dignity of character than to suppose he could waste half an hour in such company. She had seen Harry pretend to be very fond of poetry in order to please Mr. Paul; she had known her to affect ignorance in music in order to flatter Mr. Sutton, and she now pretended that she would be seized with a fictitious furor for learning, in order to captivate the Professor. But she was mistaken. To Harry a Professor was — a Professor, notwithstanding the absence of gray hairs and spectacles. She was not at all elated by his visit. She did not like Professors, and she knew that Mr. Brittain came because he thought it incumbent upon him to do so. Therefore she was not at all troubled that he came no more. But she was more mortified than she would have acknowledged, that Mrs. Dean neither came nor sent to show her any attention.

Mrs. Dean, however, was not wilfully neglectful of Harry. She was one of those weak-headed people who are made giddy by sudden elevation. Lifted from comparative poverty to abundant wealth, she was unable to support her sudden prosperity. Accustomed all her life to active exercise, her health suffered from the luxury and ease in which she now indulged, and it pleased her to pet her sick fancies into absolute illness. Her husband's cousin, Miss Hart, who had been at school with Harry, was now visiting her. She had arrived soon after Harry came to Netherford, about the time that Mrs. Dean was attacked with an illness that lasted several weeks. Miss Hart was an excellent nurse, and soon acquired almost unlimited control over the invalid. Mrs. Dean was all impatience, after the arrival of Mrs. Fan-

ning's letter, to send for Harry, but Miss Hart would not hear of it. She had been at school with Miss Vane, she said, and knew her well; her boisterous spirits would be the death of any woman with such delicate nerves as Cousin Louisa. Mrs. Dean was proud of her nerves and yielded the point. But occasionally her conscience reproached her, and Miss Hart would soothe her with pleas for her health, until one day she was very much surprised by Miss Hart herself proposing to have Harry at Hazlewood.

"I should like very much to have her, Sallie, but I am afraid my nerves would never stand her high spirits. You know you advised me not to send for her?"

"I know I did; but I now consider that you will be benefited by her society. You require excitement."

"If you think so, I can send to-morrow," said Mrs. Dean, submissively.

"No, to-day;" said Miss Sallie, positively.

"To-day is Sunday."

"That is no matter. You ought to go to church, and the afternoon service is so short you will not be fatigued. Put on your bonnet, and we can bring Miss Vane back with us."

"But now I think of it, Sallie, I will call on her to-morrow, but not invite her here until Ralph returns. He expected to be absent about a week. I would like him to meet her."

Miss Hart turned slightly pale, but Mrs. Dean did not observe it.

"Oh, Miss Vane can stay as long as she likes," said she. "And Mr. Kennett told me he expected to be absent two or three weeks."

"He did!" cried Mrs. Dean. "Dear, dear, I am always doomed to be disappointed."

Miss Hart laughed. "Do not trouble yourself about that. Put on your bonnet or we will be too late for church. Here is the carriage now. It is as well that Mr. Kennett should be out of the way at first, to give Miss Vane time to recover her *penchant* for another gentleman."

"Who, who? Pray tell me! Mr. Innibee? Mr. Sutton?"

"Do not be excited now —"

"But who is it? I cannot help wishing to know. Do tell me!"

"It is no one in Netherford: and as I am not in Miss Vane's confidence, I cannot satisfy you."

"Oh, it is some school-girl affair, then?"

"Well, Miss Vane, who is very confiding, will tell you all about it, I dare say. You must apply to her."

The interior of St. Botolf's was extremely plain, but not without a certain picturesque effect. The walls were dark, but a few panes of bright-colored glass in the upper divisions of the Gothic windows cast a soft, variegated light upon their sombre hue. Mrs. Dean and Miss Hart arrived soon after the ringing of the first bell, and lingered in the stone-paved vestibule, from which the stairs ascended to the organ-loft, to chat with the singing men and singing women, who seemed to be perpetrating subdued jokes as they sat on the steps of the stair.

"Oh, Mrs. Dean!" cried Miss Grace, "I am so glad to see you out again! It is time, now Lent is over, that you should think about giving us young folks a picnic out at Hazlewood."

"If my health would only permit," said Mrs. Dean, languidly. "But at present I cannot think of it."

"We are going to introduce Miss Vane to Hazlewood this evening," said Miss Hart. "Do you know if she is come yet?"

"I do not know, really," said Miss Grace. "Mr. Sutton do you think you could find Miss Vane?"

Mr. Sutton, who had just been introduced to Miss Hart, was "delighted to oblige," and went in search of Harry.

"I do not think she has come," continued Miss Grace. "She never comes with the Poinsetts. Miss Theresa and Miss Edna are in the church, but Harry I have not seen yet. Between us three, I do not believe she is any very great favorite with them. I have a *soup çoument* that they do not agree very well. Here comes Mr. Sutton. Is Miss Vane here? No? I hardly thought she had come."

"No;" Mr. Sutton had inquired of Miss Edna who said she knew nothing of Miss Vane.

Miss Grace laughed. "You were a daring man to ask that question," said she.

Mr. Sutton took out his watch and hummed "*A una fonte.*"

"What time is it?" asked Miss Emily.

"Bell-time," said he; and they all turned unceremoniously, and went up stairs, leaving Mrs. Dean and Miss Hart

to go on to their pew ; where, if they had been inclined to serious meditation, they must have been much disturbed by the bumping about of books, and half-subdued humming of hymns, and very loud whispering, proceeding from the organ-loft.

Harry came in after the services had begun, and sought her usual seat in the pew of the Fannings. She was accompanied by Richard Poinsett, whom no taunts of Miss Edna could deter from following wherever Harry led.

Service being over, they were coming out of the church-gate together when Miss Hart's voice screaming "Harry, Harry Vane!" from the carriage window attracted her attention.

"Why, Sallie Hart! What a surprise!" cried Harry, running eagerly to the carriage, where she beheld, by the side of Miss Hart, a pretty, but languid lady, smelling a vinaigrette.

"My cousin, Mrs. Dean," said Miss Hart.

"How do you do, Miss Vane? Your aunt has written me about you, but I really could not come to see you. I have been, oh! so ill! Sallie can tell you what a sad invalid I am. This is the first day I have ventured out, and I am still very feeble. My constitution is not strong —"

"And Harry," interrupted Miss Hart, "we came to take you back with us; cannot you come?"

"Oh! I should be so happy!" cried Harry, delighted; "but —" and she glanced at Richard, who, bashful and awkward, leaned against the gate-post. Miss Hart followed the direction of her eyes, and said, in a loud whisper,

"Is that a beau of yours?"

"Hush!" said Harry, "he will hear you. It is only Richard Poinsett."

"Oh! Richard Poinsett? Dear me; how he has grown," said Mrs. Dean. "Mr. Richard, we are going to take Miss Harry home with us. Will you not ride?"

But Richard would not; he could only conquer his bashfulness so far as to help Harry in the carriage, and then turned away gloomy enough at the prospect of giving up her delightful society.

"Be as quick as you can, my dear," said Mrs. Dean, as the carriage stopped at Mr. Poinsett's. "Do not be long in making your preparations. I am very much afraid of the evening dew."



"You need waste no time in making your adieus, my love," said Miss Hart maliciously; "for Grace Innibee has just been telling me that you are not appreciated by the Poinsetts."

"Then it was very shabby of her," said Harry, angrily.

She did not expect to be much regretted by the family, but she was very much disconcerted at having their indifference publicly remarked. However, once on the road to Hazlewood, in company with those who were pleased to have her, her chagrin was forgotten, her spirits rose, and she was so gay and charming, that Mrs. Dean sighed as she looked at her, "Ah! why is Ralph not here?"

"Only look at those plum-bushes," cried Harry; "how white! They look like the brides of spring."

"Oh! do pray, my dear! Romantic as ever?" exclaimed Miss Hart. "All that is very pretty for a composition on the seasons, but it is quite thrown away on people out of school."

"Do not let her discourage you, my dear," said Mrs. Dean; "sentiment is very becoming to young persons."

"I was not aware," said Harry, somewhat embarrassed, "that I was at all a sentimental person."

"Oh, no!" said Miss Hart, "*you* never thought all those hideous old gorgons of teachers at Mme. Camballat's angels of beauty and romance."

"No, I did not, Sallie. Do not laugh at me, but tell me what is become of all the girls, and everybody at the school?"

"Oh! well, let me see. There was old Celeste, to begin with. She was one of the first to take the fever you know, and she is now one of the celestials, it is but decent to hope, though I did hate her. That is to say, she is dead, you know."

"Oh!" said Harry, much shocked, "how can you speak in that way?"

"What way, my dear? Why, everybody knows she was old; it was time for her to die. And poor little Gracie Lewis, they say, will never recover from the effects of the fever, and Fannie May is married, and Annie Rivers is teaching school."

"Fannie married! To whom?"

"I have forgotten his name, but he is very rich. And,

oh! I had almost forgotten to tell you, Rache Porter is gone for good; never to come back to Madame's."

"Mrs. Porter gone? Where?"

"I do not know. She is a governess in some gentleman's family, I believe."

"I hope she has a good place," said Harry, "for it was not very pleasant for her at Madame's. She was the best teacher there."

"You know, do you not, Harry? You studied so hard under her," said Miss Hart.

"Well," said Harry, laughing slightly, "I did not study half so hard as I should have done, I know; but, nevertheless, Mrs. Porter was a good teacher, she was so conscientious. And she was a good Christian."

"Oh! my life;" cried Miss Hart; "how long is it since you became *dévoté*?"

"I do not pretend to be that, you know," said Harry, irritated; "but you know, as well as I do, how good she was, and that she deserved a better fate than fell to her lot in school. Mrs. Dean, she was so patient and gentle with us."

"Amen!" said Miss Hart. "We will not dispute about Mrs. Porter's merits. I always found her tiresome myself, and so did you, at school. Have you forgotten the lecture she gave you about Judge Cressing's nephew, whatever his name is?"

"No," said Harry, quickly, turning very red, "I have not forgotten; I only wish you could."

"What is that?" cried Mrs. Dean.

The carriage had stopped, and Miss Hart sprang out saying,

"You must ask Harry about that; I dare not go farther."

Mr. Dean came out to meet them. He was a great deal older than his wife; a very plain and very silent man. He proved, however, an admirable host, and Harry found him extremely indulgent.

Mrs. Dean was very little older than Miss Hart, and as far as her health would permit, entered into all the plans of the young girls for amusement. She petted Harry excessively, but never succeeded in eliciting from her any information in regard to "Judge Cressing's nephew." Indeed, she unwittingly placed Harry on her guard the very first

evening of her stay at Hazlewood; for, coming into the girls' room after tea, she abruptly asked who was this person about whom Mrs. Porter had lectured Harry at school.

"I am really nervous with curiosity, girls," said she; "and you must tell me. Come, Harry, tell me all about this Judge Crossing's nephew."

"There is nothing to tell," said Harry, laughing a little uncomfortably at the recollection of her aunt's letter.

"I do not believe you," said Mrs. Dean. "Sallie, is there not something to tell? Come, help me question her."

"Ask her about the concert," said Miss Hart.

"What concert?" said Harry.

"Why, Harry! You remember well enough the last concert we had at Mme. Camballat's."

"I have forgotten," said Harry demurely.

"That is a story!" said Miss Hart. "You were too hoarse to sing, and you sat on one of the back benches, and Mrs. Porter saw him — just before the concert was over" —

"Well?" said Mrs. Dean. "Saw him; what else? Go on."

"Kiss my hand," said Harry, very coolly. "Come, I am tired of all this; let us talk of something else."

"No, no," said Mrs. Dean. "I must know his name and all about him."

"But I do not know all about him," said Harry, naively.

"Show us your hands, Harry," said Miss Hart.

Harry raised a pair of little plump white hands, on one finger of which glittered a diamond.

"Tell us about that ring," said Mrs. Dean.

"It was my mother's," said Harry quietly.

"Oh! come," said Miss Hart, with an incredulous look, "we are going too far; let us ask no more."

Mrs. Dean became obediently silent and soon after left the room.

"How long have you been here, Sallie?" asked Harry.

"Three or four weeks," replied Miss Hart.

"Why, Sallie; you have been here nearly as long as I have, and have never once been to see me. I would not have treated you in that way."

"Oh! my dear child, do not scold, I beg. You do not know how I was situated. Cousin Louisa was taken sick the day after I came, and it was impossible to leave her."

Miss Hart did not think fit to add that Mrs. Dean's

brother was a constant attendant upon his sister's sick-room.

"Is it not odd that we should have met here? How did you happen to come, Sallie?"

"Well," said Miss Hart, confidently, "I will tell you exactly how it was. You know I went back to school as a parlor boarder, for papa insisted that I must perfect myself in music and French. When the school was broken up, I thought I could go at once into society, though it was Lent, but old Aunt Davis died, and mamma determined that I must go into mourning, which, as you see, is shockingly unbecoming to me. She left all she had to Henry and Frank, and nothing to me, so that I do not see the use of stuffing myself up in black. But mamma would have it so, and as she would not hear of my going to parties, I became disgusted, and concluded to weather it out up here. If I can persuade her to let me put on half mourning, which is elegant, if not showy, I shall go with Cousin Louisa to the Springs. It is a lucky thing for me that Cousin James married a woman I could like. She is a good creature, though between you and me, she is a little soft." And Miss Hart gracefully tapped her head, which indeed, was no softer than — her heart.

"Oh! she seems to be very good," said Harry. "I am going with her to Myrtle Springs, too. How nice it will be for us all to go together. Uncle John and Aunt Eleanor will not return to Netherford until the fall."

"And, oh Harry! we will have such a cosey time here, now Mr. Kennett is away."

"What sort of a person is he?" asked Harry.

"Oh! I do not know. He is extremely fastidious. I do not think you would like him; I am sure you would not, for he would be certain to laugh at you, and make fun of you, and put you in a passion."

"He must be a very disagreeable person," said Harry; "I am glad he is not here."

"If he were here I know he would be a great restraint upon you."

"No such thing!" said Harry indignantly. "I wish he were here with all my heart; I would soon show him."

"Moreover," said Miss Hart, "he has the reputation of being a great flirt, and of having a very good opinion of himself, and of being very heartless."

"What a very disagreeable person he must be," said Harry, sleepily. "I wish he were here."

There was silence for a few moments, and then Harry, suddenly rousing herself, exclaimed,

"But, Sallie, you must be mistaken about his being heartless; for I have heard he was very fond of his aunt, old Mrs. Marshall."

"La! my dear; only the affectation of eccentricity," laughed Miss Hart. "He really makes the old lady ridiculous, he is so absurd about her."

"Well," said Harry, "I do not know if I should like him to be here after all. I know I should be very unamiable if he were."

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## CHAPTER V.

### PROGRESS.



MISS HART had accounted for her visit to Hazlewood truthfully, so far as her statement of the facts went. But she had a great object in view which she did not care to discuss with any one. Mrs. Dean's brother was, she thought, a prize well worth every effort on her part to win. She knew that she was not remarkable for beauty; her swarthy cheeks suffered by contrast with Harry's glowing roses; nor were her features such as to atone for her want of a fine complexion; but she had a fine figure and a graceful carriage, and these she thought sufficiently powerful attractions. Notwithstanding this confidence in herself, however, she feared Harry would prove a powerful rival. Mr. Kennett was safely out of the way, she thought, and before he could return, Harry's visit would be over. But for fear unforeseen circumstances should throw them together sooner than she desired, she had taken care to imbue Harry with some prejudice by which she would certainly be influenced in her manner to Mr. Kennett, and which would prevent her making a good

impression. She had cause to congratulate herself upon this politic measure, the next morning, when, to her great surprise, she met Mr. Kennett in the dining-room.

"Dear me!" she cried, "I thought you were an hundred miles away!"

"No," said he, carelessly, "I did not go, or rather, I returned before I finished my journey. I did not like to go over to my lonesome bachelor's hall, so I stopped where I knew I should find pleasant company."

"And you shall have a pleasant surprise. We have here a sylph, with soft brown curls, and rosy cheeks, and a dimple in her chin."

"Indeed! And by what name do mortals call her?"

"The ridiculously unfeminine one of *Harry*."

"I hope she is as original as her name," said he, with forced interest. "Who is she?"

"Miss Vane."

"Miss Vane? I had forgotten. Mrs. Fanning's niece, is she not? Is she pretty?"

"Now that is always the first question with gentlemen," answered Miss Hart, a little piqued.

"She is nothing but a school-girl," said Mr. Kennett, laughing; "and if a mere school-girl is not pretty, what can there be to recommend her?"

"Oh! she has a fortune, and she is considered quite pretty; but I shall not describe her; you may judge for yourself. I will warn you though, to be wary; do not lose your heart, for *her* heart, I have reason to think, is already bestowed."

"That is unfortunate for me," said Mr. Kennett.

"Very! But 'forewarned, forearmed!'"

"How kind of you to put me on my guard. It is quite a friendly act."

"I am always a friend of yours," said Miss Hart.

"Why, Ralph! what brought you back?" cried Mrs. Dean, as much surprised to see him as Miss Sallie. "But I am overjoyed to see you, whatever brought you. I am particularly glad, because Mrs. Fanning's niece, Miss Vane, is now with me. You will be sure to fall in love with her at first sight."

"If I had known such danger awaited me," returned her brother with a laugh, "I would have stayed away."

"Nonsense! Sallie, where is Harry? Please send for her."

"Miss Sallie sent the servant for Harry, and returned to her seat, eager to learn why Mr. Kennett came back.

"I thought you were half way to Argentum. Have you given up the trip, or only put it off?" asked Mrs. Dean.

"Given it up, I suppose. That Fletcher must be fickle as the wind. When I arrived at Foxley I found a dispatch saying he had left Argentum and declined to sell. This is the third time he has changed his mind. Next week I shall receive a letter from him saying he has reconsidered the matter, and will sell Four-Oaks."

"Then I am sure I would not buy it," said his sister, indignantly.

"Yes, I will, if I can. It suits my fancy, and I mean to have the place if possible. I believe Fletcher is a myth. I never heard of his having a 'local habitation,' until Hollis sent me that note saying he was in Argentum. I hope breakfast is not very far away. My ride has sharpened my appetite wonderfully."

"It will soon be ready; I am only waiting for Harry. I cannot imagine why she does not make her appearance."

Now Harry, when she heard Mr. Kennett was in the house, was not well pleased, and determined to be absent from breakfast. She walked away to the grove, but had not gone very far when she became aware that such behavior was very silly and rude, and she returned to the house. She entered the dining-room just as Mrs. Dean, in despair, had ordered in breakfast.

"Oh, you runaway!" she cried. "What a color your walk has given you. Let me introduce my brother, Mr. Kennett, Miss Vane. You did not expect to see him, did you? His visit is a surprise to me."

Harry bowed with an air of superior dignity. She saw that Mr. Kennett was suppressing a smile, and she was determined to show him that she could not be overawed by him. But Mr. Kennett thought her only a very pretty little school-girl imitating the airs of a woman, and not knowing what to say to her, asked her when she was going back to school.

"I am not going back at all," said she stiffly. "I am nearly eighteen."

Mr. Kennett laughed.

"Ralph, I am ashamed of you!" said his sister. "How rude. Do not mind him, Harry, my dear."

"I am quite old enough to go into society," said Harry, determined to make him acknowledge her claim to superior consideration.

"Oh! I did not know that," said Mr. Kennett. "Young ladies in society are seldom addicted to walking in the dew—" Harry glanced at her dew-stained dress, colored, and sat down with an air of assumed indifference. "Nor," continued Mr. Kennett, "do I remember many young ladies out of school who retain a fondness for wild violets and wild flowers generally."

Harry threw her bunch of violets angrily on the carpet, and Sallie Hart laughed.

"Give them to me, Miss Harry," said Mr. Kennett, stooping to pick them up.

"No, No!" she cried, putting her foot on the flowers, "I will not; you are no friend of mine."

"Oh, Ralph!" said Mrs. Dean; "why do you tease her so?"

"Miss Harry," said Mr. Kennett, "I deserve no flowers at your hands, I acknowledge. But you misunderstood me. I am sorry to have offended you, and will atone for my teasing in any way. Only you must let me be a friend of yours. Some wiseacre has said it is best to begin with a little aversion."

"We ought to be very good friends, then, by and by," said Harry, picking up her violets. "I have a great aversion for people who laugh at me."

"I will never laugh at you, I promise you," said Mr. Kennett. "Let us make a treaty of friendship."

"Wait," said Harry, disdainfully.

"How long?"

"I cannot tell." And thinking him a very disagreeable person, fully as unbearable as Sallie Hart had led her to expect, she left the room as soon as breakfast was over, and rejoiced greatly when she heard he was to leave before dinner. But he did not stay long away. He was at Hazlewood almost every day, and Harry began to think him not so very disagreeable after all. Certainly the time passed more pleasantly, enlivened by his society. Mrs. Dean, though willing to do everything in her power for Harry's enjoyment, avoided inviting company to meet her, for fear of distracting that course of true love which she hoped would spring up between her brother and Miss Vane.



She claimed Miss Hart's exclusive attention for herself, and used every endeavor to throw Mr. Kennett and Harry together, and he very soon discovered that she could be a delightful companion. At first he thought her simply amusing, but as he became better acquainted with her he found that under an inexhaustible fund of gayety there lay a vein of earnestness that was never paraded, yet never concealed when circumstances called it forth; for she had not yet learned that earnestness and enthusiasm often excite ridicule. He now found her not only amusing but interesting; and it was no longer necessary for his sister to urge him to give up his cigar in order, to talk, or walk, or ride with Miss Vane. She was not so studious to please as Miss Hart, and for this very reason, perhaps, she pleased him more. Her genuine good feeling was evident in all she did.

"What are you doing there, Miss Harry?" said he, one afternoon when he found her on the piazza-steps with her lap full of such common flowers as the early spring affords.

"Making wreaths to wear to tea. Why did you come so early? They will lose their effect. If you had only stayed away a little longer!"

"Miss Sallie would not have said that to me," said he, pretending to be hurt.

"Go talk with her, then; she is in the parlor reading, and she says she feels so dull."

"I do not wish to go. I like better to sit here with you. Those are very ugly flowers; I thought ladies wore only handsome flowers."

"They are not ugly," said Harry. "No flowers are ugly. Some are handsomer than others, but all are pretty."

"Do you mean to say you think those lilacs and syringas pretty?"

"Yes, indeed, I think them pretty. They remind me of my grandmother's garden. It was full of all old-fashioned flowers; and I used to think, and still think, it a delightful pastime to make bouquets of just such flowers as these. There were lilacs, and syringas, and hollyhocks, and bachelor's-buttons, and pinks, and tiger-lilies. When I have a garden of my own I mean to have all those flowers."

"Have a hot-house, also, please, and cultivate some fuschias and japonicas for my sake."

"I like fuschias and japonicas too; but they are like fine ladies, they require so much attention. Now only keep

away the weeds and these common flowers will bloom so generously. There! my wreaths are finished! This white one is for Miss Hart; you may have the honor of putting it on for her."

"Thank you. It would please me more to put yours on for you."

"Oh! you only say that to be polite."

"No indeed; I am in earnest."

Harry made no reply but put her wreath on for herself.

"Why did you do that? You thought me clumsy?"

"No," said Harry.

"You did not believe I was in earnest."

"No."

"Why?"

"Because I heard you tell Miss Hart the other day that you thought her hair so beautiful you would like to be a hair-dresser to have the privilege of arranging it."

"Well, I do think she has beautiful hair."

"But you do not want to be dressing it, or you would be glad to take that wreath to her."

"Oh! if it will please you, I will put it on, certainly."

"I do not care at all," said Harry, going in search of Mrs. Dean and Miss Hart. Presently she led them out, duly bedecked in their wreaths, and gayly challenged the admiration of the gentlemen.

"Really, Harry," said Miss Hart, "Cousin James and Mr. Kennett will think us very silly."

"No such thing!" returned Harry. "Are we not beautiful in our wreaths, Mr. Dean?"

"Beautiful, beautiful," said Mr. Dean mechanically.

"Now, Mrs. Dean," said Harry, "let us have tea soon over, please, and then we will have a dance."

"How will you manage a dance, Harry," said Miss Hart wearily, "with so small a company?"

"I will show you after tea," said Harry gayly.

And after tea, Harry, as mistress of ceremonies, placed Mrs. Dean at the piano, took Mr. Dean for her partner, and with Miss Hart and Mr. Kennett for a *vis-à-vis*, introduced the most intricate figures, plentifully interspersed with elaborate bows and courtesies. Mr. Dean, obliging and clumsy, performed to the best of his ability the impossibilities demanded of him, while Miss Hart protested and Mr. Kennett laughed, until at last Mrs. Dean broke up the ball by declaring herself too tired to play longer.

"There!" cried Harry triumphantly, throwing herself into a chair, "who is to blame if you are dull?"

"Dull?" said Mr. Kennett, "I defy any one to be dull where you are!"

"If there were only a few more," said Miss Hart, who, though she danced with Mr. Kennett, was beginning to feel that a little more variety would be more agreeable. "Cousin Louisa, do you think it too early in the season for a picnic?"

"I fear it is rather early," said Mrs. Dean, who was too well pleased with the present order of things to wish to change it.

"Oh! how delightful!" cried Harry. "Oh! Mrs. Dean, please do not say 'no;' it cannot be too early."

"Miss Harry you shall have a picnic," said Mr. Kennett. "Let us draw up a list." And he drew out his pencil.

"Let it be perfect," said Harry; "a list of all agreeable people, for I never was at a picnic in my life."

"You never were? Then we must have one. Tell me whom to write down. A few of those college admirers, and Mr. Sutton and Mr. Innibee, of course. Shall I put down Mr. Poinsett's family?"

"No," said Harry; "well, yes, Richard; you may write down Richard."

"Is he one of your agreeable people? Here is his name, then. Whom else? Oh! we forgot the Innibeas. There is Miss Grace; you like her, do you not?" said Mr. Kennett, writing away.

"No," said Harry.

"Why, I thought you liked her very much?"

"I did until Sunday before last," said Harry.

Mr. Kennett threw down his pencil, leaned back in his chair, and looked at her with some surprise. At last he said, half laughing,

"Well, you are the most extraordinary young lady I ever saw! Pray, are you always able to assign the exact date for the expiration of your friendships. Do your likes and dislikes run a certain course like measles or scarlet fever, or do you always put aside friendships, with other worldly concerns, on Sundays?"

"No," said Harry, laughing a little, "I have ceased to like her as I once did because — I —"

"You are systematically fickle, then?"

"No; why do you laugh?"

"Indeed, I am perfectly serious. I am curious to know the secret of your sudden discovery. Do explain to me the course by which Miss Grace first fascinated and then disenchanted you?"

"Well, you see I was, or am, what experienced persons like yourself would call 'green,'" said Harry, speaking slowly, and looking at him doubtfully.

"Precisely," said he, without moving a muscle.

"But I am not so 'green' as to stay here and be laughed at by you," said she, rising angrily.

"Stay! Stay! Miss Harry, let us be friends. I know Miss Grace well enough to know the fault must lie with her. She does not enjoy a reputation for truthfulness."

"Oh, I have given you a wrong impression," said Harry. "What she said of me was perfectly true."

"And cannot you bear the truth?"

"It depends very much upon the way in which it is spoken. I do not like to have a disagreeable truth publicly proclaimed. Let us say no more about it, if you please."

"Certainly. Miss Sallie, you must help us about this list. Have you no names to give us?"

"Let us have all who could expect an invitation," said Miss Sallie. "It would not do to leave any one out."

"Very well," said Mr. Kennett; "if I omit any one you must tell me. Oh! Miss Harry, I have a name! How could I forget Mr. Professor? But he will never come. He is as averse to ladies' society, as a bear."

"I have seen him," said Harry, "and I like him. He is not a bear at all; I should think him more of a lion."

"You and he must have entered into a solemn league and covenant to pay each other compliments," Mr. Kennett said laughing. "He told me, only the other day, that he thought you had a great deal of sentiment."

"There now!" cried Harry; "the second person I have heard of talking about me." The remembrance of her idle remarks about Four-Oaks embarrassed her so much that she could not reply to Mr. Kennett's excuses and explanations. She was sure Mr. Brittain had repeated to his friend her silly expressions about him, at that time a stranger to her. She sat in mortified silence, her head upon her hand, an object of curious surprise to Mr. Kennett, who could not understand why she should be so excited by a trifling com-

pliment. When she at length regained composure, Miss Hart had finished the list, and decided that the following Friday would be the most convenient day.

The next morning, Mr. Kennett, smoking alone on the piazza, was pondering Harry's behavior of the evening before. "How different she is," he thought, "from all those other Fannings! They were, without exception, the most artificial girls I ever saw. What was it Grace Innibee said of her, I should like to know?" Suddenly the disclosure Sallie Hart made to him, the first morning he saw Harry, recurred to his mind. "Nonsense! it is impossible that such a mere child can have an affair of the heart —"

"Good morning," said a voice behind him.

"Good morning!" said he, as he turned and saw, not the young lady of whom he was thinking, but Miss Hart, beautifully dressed.

"Do not throw away your cigar," said she; but it was too late — the cigar was already breathing out its last sparks on the grass. "Oh! what a pity! for I do not object to smoke as Harry does. I dare say you were thinking of her, you threw it away so quickly when you heard my voice."

"Well," he said, laughing, "to be as frank as Miss Vane herself, since it is not possible to conceal anything from your penetration, I was thinking of her."

"Ah!" said Miss Hart, "have you forgotten my warning?"

"Not at all. On the contrary, I have been thinking about it all this morning, and I am very anxious to have it repeated in detail. Do give me all the particulars."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Miss Hart, recoiling with affected dismay. "I cannot betray Harry; you have no idea how she resents having her affairs talked of."

"I can imagine," said he, laughing, "from what passed last night. Perhaps that is why she ceased to like Grace Innibee on Sunday before last?"

"Yes."

"Does Miss Innibee know anything about Miss Vane's engagement?"

"*Engagement?* Pray do not misunderstand me. I should not have said anything to you about this. Harry will be very angry."

"But, having told me, why should you hesitate? May I have your permission to ask Harry about it?"

"Harry? You are progressing rapidly."

"It was a slip of the tongue," said he, with a slight laugh. "But I am so much older, I might adopt her."

"Whom?" asked Harry, who came on the piazza just in time to hear this remark.

"If you tell her she will be offended," whispered Miss Hart.

"You," said Mr. Kennett, in defiance of this admonition.

"You would repent it," said Harry, without the least vexation.

"No, I think not."

"You would soon be tired of me, — of any one."

"Why?"

"Because you are cold and worldly; you have not feeling enough —"

"Why, Harry!" Miss Hart almost screamed, "how can you say such things?"

"Oh! do let her go on," said Mr. Kennett, laughing.

"This is delightful! I have had my fortune told many times in the most flattering manner, but this is such a very unpromising beginning I must hear the conclusion. Pray proceed, Miss Harry. I thought the first time I saw you that you were wonderfully like a gypsy. Let me hear what destiny is in store for my unfeeling heart."

"I shall not proceed," said Harry; "you only hope I will flatter you."

Miss Hart rose and went in. Mr. Kennett did not attempt to detain her, but moved his seat nearer to Harry.

"You would not put me on the list of your agreeable people, then?" he said.

"Yes; you are good-natured and I like you."

"That is kind! But Miss Grace Innibee is good-natured too; every one says she is very good-natured —" He paused for a reply, but Harry was silent. "Do you not think her good-natured?" he asked.

"No, I do not," said Harry.

"At what o'clock on Sunday before last did you find that out?"

Harry laughed and then said gravely, "I cannot think any one good-natured who says disagreeable things of the absent."

"As we are doing now, for instance?"

"Yes."

“But, Miss Harry, you must not think me destitute of all feeling. I can prove a sympathizing friend, and I really would like to know what Miss Grace has said to incur your condemnation? Did she cut you out in the good graces of your college admirers?”

“Nonsense!” said Harry. “This is not what I call sympathy.”

“Nay, then, Miss Harry, what was it that terminated your friendship so suddenly on Sunday before last?”

“I think it was very cruel of her,” said Harry, impetuously, “to say before so many, as she did in church that Sunday that I — that my — that they do not like me at Uncle Poinsett’s; it is very mortifying.” And she turned her face away, for her eyes were full of tears.

“But why let that distress you? It cannot be true.”

“Yes; but it is true, I am afraid. You see I am very full of faults.”

“There is one of the family who cares about you, I am sure.”

“Oh! Richard? Hum! Richard is very good. One cannot help liking him.”

“He has a great deal of feeling, I suppose?”

“Yes, I think he has.”

“Miss Harry, why do you think I have none?”

“Oh! because — because — I cannot tell you. Besides, I have changed my mind within the last few minutes.”

The ringing of the breakfast-bell put an end to this interesting conversation. It was Thursday, and Harry heard with dismay Mr. Dean’s prognostications of bad weather. He proved a true prophet, and the picnic had to be postponed indefinitely. They consoled themselves with the reflection that it might prove a more agreeable entertainment later in the season, and in a few days Harry returned to Netherford.

## CHAPTER VI.

## QUODLIBET.



XCEEDINGLY inopportune was Miss Vane's return to the home of her kindred: the Quodlibet, of which Miss Edna was a conspicuous member, was expected to meet at Mr. Poinsett's the evening of the day upon which Harry came back. The Quodlibet comprised among its members, all the talent and fashion of Netherford. Harry had heard vague allusions to this distinguished society in the giddy circle which she frequented, and she had heard Mr. Kennett laugh at it, but she had never hoped for the extreme felicity of attending in person one of the sittings of this august body.

Mrs. Poinsett, who was very busy preparing for the bodily refreshment of the guests, rejoiced greatly at her young visitor's absence, and would have welcomed her serenely the day after the entertainment; but unfortunately, Harry came in the midst of the cake-making, and greatly disconcerted the bustling housekeeper. Miss Edna, too, heard of her return with dismay; for Miss Edna expected to read that night an original essay, the *Æsthetics of Teaching*, an elaborate production which had occupied her for some weeks past. She by no means relished the prospect of having silly little Miss Vane among the audience, and held with her sister-in-law, a long consultation as to the propriety or practicability of ignoring the unwelcome intruder, and permitting her to retire after dinner, uninformed as to the cause of that hubbub of preparation which now pervaded the house. Mrs. Poinsett was anxious to gratify Miss Edna, but unwilling to display such discourtesy, and so they came to no decision.

Meanwhile, Harry, quickly perceiving that something unusual was about to take place, retired to her own room full of eager thoughts. She dearly loved a "party," but



she could hardly believe that a party was really about to take place in this dull house. Then reflecting that nothing had been said to her on the subject, she came to the conclusion that Miss Edna intended to entertain some of her learned friends, and looked forward with a certain degree of complacency to a quiet evening in her own room. She could not help pitying Blanche, who was helping Miss Theresa to finish a pink barège.

The Poinsett children were at this time in a state of fearful demoralization. Miss Edna had somewhat neglected her vocation of teaching within the last few days, and her young nephews rejoiced in the absence of her control. Jack made excursions to the pantry and kitchen, and enriched himself with dainties. It is probable that he also helped himself to wine, for Davy, the youngest, finding him more formidable than usual, had requested to be locked up in a bedroom, up-stairs, with his "*Lepsey*." Lepsey was the name of the sickly, pet kitten, a contraction of Epilepsy, which appropriate cognomen had been bestowed by Dr. Innibee. Mortimer, who was decidedly a favorite with Harry, was in disgrace, not an uncommon event with him, and was imprisoned in the school-room with his Latin Grammar. Here Harry, wandering listlessly about the house, discovered him, in woeful plight. She had no idea that she ran any risk of incurring Miss Edna's displeasure, and immediately addressed herself to the task of cheering the prisoner. Mortimer enjoyed her company too well to hint that it was contrary to his aunt's rule that he should receive attention while in durance vile. The Latin Grammar was forgotten, and Harry and the delinquent chatted on in high spirits.

"Are you going to—er, what's-his-name to-night?" asked Mortimer.

"What?" said Harry. "Do speak intelligibly."

"Oh, you know what I mean! This what-you-call-em; this big meetin' they have every Thursday night."

"Oh! you mean the Society, the Quodlibet?"

"That's a fact, and no mistake!"

"What about it, Mortimer? Did you ever attend one of their meetings?"

"Not me! I'd go to Jericho first. Anyhow, Aunt Edna would not let me."

"You do not know what they do then, when they meet?"

"I only know they read and sing. It aint a prayer-meetin', I know, because they have cakes and 'such. I suppose it's a sort of grown-up school."

"Oh! they have cakes?" after a pause, "Mortimer, do you not think it must be fine fun?"

"Well, — I don't know," said he dryly; "I never saw much fun when Aunt Edna was about. They don't get round to this house very often, but when they do come they never laugh much. Aunt Edna makes Blanche go, she says it's improving; but Dick doesn't think so, for the last time they met here he went to bed."

"I know if I were a boy," said Harry, rashly, "I would hide under the sofa in the parlor and find out what they do. I suspect it is a kind of Masonic Brotherhood."

"You wont catch me at that game! No *ma'am!*" said Mortimer, with emphasis; "I am too much afraid of Aunt Edna."

Harry's light laugh was brought to a sudden close by the sound of Miss Edna's stern voice asking Mortimer for his book.

"Oh! Miss Edna!" cried Harry, "Miss Edna! he does not know his lesson, and it is entirely my fault. Pray, pray, do not blame him. I am so sorry."

"I will be obliged to you, Miss Vane," said Miss Edna, with severe calmness, "to intrude no longer within my school-room. Mortimer, you are to go instantly to your room, and remain there until I release you. Moreover, this lesson must be learned within the space of half an hour. Miss Vane, I await your departure;" inclining her head haughtily.

"Please, Miss Edna—"

"Go, go," said Miss Edna, impatiently, "my time is valuable."

Harry went, irritated beyond measure. But her wrath had cooled by the time she came down to dinner. She had had time for reflection, and had resolved to apologize to Miss Edna, provided she could induce her to listen to her.

Now Miss Edna rather rejoiced over Harry's infringement of her rules. It seemed to offer a good excuse for excluding her from the Quodlibet. At table she would receive none of her advances, so that Harry at length began to think it scarcely worth while to try to atone for her

offence. Mr. Poinsett came in so late that Miss Edna had not had time to make her complaint against Harry, and that genial personage gaily demanded of his ward, if she expected to enjoy herself at the Quodlibet? Thus was the invitation given, feebly seconded by Mrs. Poinsett, and received with delight by Harry. She had not expected to be invited, and the surprise prevented Mrs. Poinsett's indifference from making any impression upon her. Indeed, that lady was not of herself unwilling, but she stood much in awe of her sister-in-law.

"Will you be there, Uncle Poinsett?" said Harry.

"Not I, child!" said he with a loud laugh, "it is out of my line entirely."

"Oh! I am sorry," said Harry.

"Oh! you'll never miss me, there will be plenty; so dress your very best, and catch some of those old bachelors."

"Which one?" said Harry.

"Well, there is George Dunbar, the very one. He is a sort of cousin of the family, and a wild man of the woods. Edna has been trying to civilize him, but she cannot succeed. I should like to see you get hold of him."

"Really, brother," said Miss Edna, "what *grossièreté!*"

"Oh! grosserty me! Run Harry, and dress your best; and Miss Blanchey, try to hold yourself straight, like your cousin!"

"Papa cares nothing about *my* dress," said Blanche, pouting.

"Just wait, my little lady, until you are a few years older. It is time you were in bed."

Blanche retired in tears, and Miss Edna in wrath. Meanwhile, Harry, selecting her dress in the solitude of her chamber, was magnanimously resolving that Mr. Dunbar should not admire her too much, since Miss Edna had a prior claim to him. Her heart softened toward that grim lady, when she reflected that her harshness and sternness might be the effect of disappointed feelings, and she firmly resolved that nothing should prevent her making peace with her. Indeed, she felt that a good understanding was now become necessary to her own enjoyment of the evening. Vainly she sought an opportunity; Miss Edna did not appear at tea, and Harry could not summon the resolution to knock

for admittance to her awful sanctuary. But she was resolved on peace.

"I will write," she said, in the midst of her toilette. "I think, after all, it is really very much better to write."

So opening her writing-desk, she expressed her contrition upon some fancy note-paper, and left it to dry while she finished dressing. The ringing of the door-bell warned her that she must be quick, if she would have Miss Edna read the note before going to the parlor. She hurried to her desk, snatched with careless haste a sheet of note-paper, thrust it into an envelope, scribbled the direction, and sealing it as she went, ran down the passage and thrust it under Miss Edna's door. But she was too late; Miss Edna was down stairs with the others receiving the guests. Quite disappointed, Harry tarried long on the stair, and then hurried with sudden resolution to the parlor. There was a great noise of voices when she entered, for the business of the Society had not yet begun, and all was talking and confusion. Miss Vane endured a few moments of excessive embarrassment while she stood in the midst of so many strange faces, but she was presently relieved by Richard's familiar voice, offering her a seat.

"Oh, dear! Richard," she whispered, giving his arm a pinch as she went with him to a distant sofa, "how glad I am that you are here."

Richard blushed with pleasure, stammered some confused reply about the pleasure of seeing her there, and said, "Miss Dalrymple will play presently, she plays very well."

Harry was fond of music, and would gladly have listened in quiet to the excellent playing of Miss Dalrymple, but such felicity she was not destined to enjoy. She looked so pretty and fresh in her simple white dress, and her knot of blue violets that many admired as she passed, and one elderly, awkward, fantastic beau followed Richard and demanded an introduction.

Richard introduced "Mr. Dunbar" with rather a bad grace, for he had wished himself to monopolize Miss Vane's society. Mr. Dunbar, however, gave him no opportunity to converse with her. The first notes that Miss Dalrymple struck inspired him, and poor Harry could not enjoy the music, so incessantly did he talk.

Miss Emily and Miss Grace were there, and Mr. Paul.

Also Mr. and Mrs. Brittain, with many others whom Harry did not know. When the music ceased, Mr. Paul began to read some extracts from a new poem he had written, and then Miss Edna was called upon for her essay.

A labored production it was, which wearied her hearers; but Miss Edna read on, happily unconscious of the effect she produced. Page after page she turned over, as she wandered in the shades of Academia, in company with Lasthenia and Axiothea, these two unwomanly females, who, in their love of learning, wore men's garbs, to study under Plato. She had much to say of Pestalozzi, of Count Rumford, of Maria Edgeworth, Thomas Day, and Madame Campan. Mr. Sutton, finding all this excessively tiresome, sought a seat on Harry's sofa. He persisted in talking in a whisper about the picnic, of which he had heard much, and which he awaited with impatience, abusing Mr. Kennett slyly, and asking many questions about Miss Hart.

Miss Edna still read, unwearied, and finally came to consider the art of teaching in connection with herself. She took great pride in her talent for instruction, and had much to say concerning her system. Rather a severe system it was in theory, and not altogether successful in practice. She had forgotten the days, the days that never come again, when the cool waters of the babbling brook were sweeter than draughts from the Pierian Spring; when the perilous sea-saw and the rushing swing carried their riders nearer heaven than all the philosophies that were ever written. Women, perhaps, do not so often bewail "the sunny hours of childhood" as the sterner sex, but Miss Edna had utterly forgotten them; she had no *sympathy with youth*.

While she pursued her theme, unmindful of the weariness of her audience, Harry was startled by a voice in her ear, uttering these words.

"I say! I'm gettin' mighty tired of this; when are the cakes comin' on?"

The voice proceeded from behind the sofa, and as she turned, she beheld with amazement and consternation, Master Jack's curly pate just on a level with her own.

"Why Jack!" cried she, in a startled whisper, "what are you doing here? Why did you come? Do hide yourself, pray do." She thought of the playful suggestion she had made to Mortimer, with dismay.

"Come now," said Jack, "how you talk! I would like to know if you did not tell Mort to do this very thing?"

"I did not!" said Harry, indignantly. "Mortimer knew very well I was not in earnest."

"Well, if you don't give me some cake when it comes, I will come right out and say you told me to hide here. Say, will you drop some under the sofa for me?"

"Oh! yes, yes, Jack, anything; Miss Edna is looking this way now."

"What is the matter?" asked Mr. Sutton, who for the last ten minutes had been lost in thought.

"John is hid under the sofa," said Harry, in accents of despair.

"Oh, ho! the young demon who throws cats, eh?"

"Oh! please do not take revenge now; help me to keep him quiet."

Miss Edna had now brought her reading to a close, and the refreshments were served. Mr. Sutton filled his plate lavishly, and kept Harry in a state of terrified amusement by dropping pieces of cake between his knees, which were immediately appropriated by a little sun-burned hand. But John was not to be kept quiet by donations of cake. He found his confinement very irksome, and sought to relieve it by pinching the ankles of the gentlemen who came to talk to Harry. On this account they did not particularly enjoy her society. Mr. Dunbar alone endured the persecution with heroism, if not with patience. His uneasy starts and half-uttered anathemas gave John the hysterics, and tried Harry's propriety severely. The annoyance ceased at last, for the pincher had fallen asleep.

Mr. Sutton and Miss Grace Innibee had been delighting the company with solos and duets excessively operatic, and now as the hour was late, it was proposed that they should sing a chorus before breaking up.

In vain did they urge Harry to assist; her ear had been saluted from time to time, by some very ominous sounds from under the sofa, and she dared not stir. As soon as the crowd gathered around the piano, she signed to Richard to come to her.

"Oh, Richard!" she cried, "Jack is under the sofa, and I am afraid he is asleep; what shall we do?"

"Jack under the sofa!" cried Richard, aghast. "And asleep? He snores dreadfully."

"I know it," said Harry, "I hear him now."

The voices of the singers rose and swelled harmoniously,

and then there came "a dying fall," in the midst of which, John made himself audible. Many eyes were turned to the sofa where Harry sat between Richard and Mr. Dunbar. She colored guiltily, and again that mysterious sound issued from under the sofa. Miss Edna cleared her throat ominously, and Richard gave the author of the disturbance a very decided kick, which had nearly upset him, and caused John to mutter in his sleep, "Quit now!"

The music had ceased by this time. "What now?" cried Mr. Sutton, rising from the piano, "is that boy asleep?"

"Richard," said poor Mrs. Poinsett, painfully embarrassed, "what is all this disturbance about?"

"John, ma'am," said Richard, laconically.

Now Miss Edna was fond of John, and would not hear him blamed, so she said, dryly,

"I am inclined to think Miss Vane concerned in it; she is noted for her *espièglerie*."

Poor Harry would have given worlds to be able to deny the charge.

"Nay, nay," said Mr. Sutton, "Miss Vane sings very sweetly, I know, but I protest I do not believe she can equal that."

In the midst of much laughter and confusion, Richard extricated Master John, and bore him struggling to bed. Harry made her escape to her own room as quickly as possible, and walked up and down in a state of great excitement. "Oh! that John!" she said, "he will be the death of me! Who would have supposed that what I said in fun to Mortimer, would have made him come into the parlor? And there I was made to feel and act and look like a goose, and nobody to explain that I was not to blame. And nobody ever will believe but that it was all my fault. And poor Richard! Did he not act like a brave young knight through the whole? I declare I could laugh if it had not made me look so awkward. Miss Edna will never forgive me now. Oh, dear me! what a time!"

Sympathy for Mrs. Poinsett's mortification, there was none in Harry's heart. Indeed, she did not think of any one's annoyance but her own and Richard's, and had she thought of Mrs. Poinsett at all, she would probably have refused her sympathy on the ground that she should have trained John better.

But Miss Edna was too full of indignation to seek relief in the privacy of her chamber. She hastened to her brother as soon as the guests were departed, and related with great warmth the events of the evening. It may be supposed her account was not favorable to Harry, but it was very amusing to Mr. Poinsett, who listened with roars of laughter.

"I am sure I do not see why you laugh," said Miss Edna. "To me it is melancholy to reflect that Blanche should be so intimately exposed to the injurious influence of this boarding-school Miss. I felt a presentiment that she would play off some *diablerie* to-night, but I confess she surpassed my expectations."

"Oh! come, come, Edna, do not be so prejudiced. Girls will be girls. I dare say she is sorry. You must remember that she has not enjoyed the advantages of a home-education."

Miss Edna was soothed by this indirect compliment, and regarded Harry's misdemeanors with more leniency. "It is to be regretted," she said, that Miss Vane had received a boarding-school education; she feared it was now too late to rectify the evil tendency of such a system, and therefore she felt it her duty to be more than ever watchful that Blanche did not become contaminated by association with this giddy young girl."



## CHAPTER VII.

## EPILEPSY.



**A**LAS! for Miss Edna's short-lived charity; the note which she found under her door destroyed it utterly, and confirmed her in her early unfavorable opinion of Harry. She prevented her niece altogether from associating with her, whereas Blanche fretted far more than Harry, who having many agreeable companions out of the house, rather rejoiced to be rid of Blanche's companionship in walks and visits. Miss Edna did not acknowledge the note, which mortified Harry a little, and decided her to explain the affair of Master John to his mother, as a less formidable judge. Mrs. Poinsett timidly exonerated her, acknowledged that the children were very bad, but did not open her heart to her, which made Harry cry a little for her Aunt Eleanor.

Her magnanimity was put to a severe test in the case of Mr. Dunbar; and, that it should be written in the history of Miss Vane! she was not proof against the temptation to *amuse* herself with him, as she expressed it. "If he likes me better than Miss Edna how can I help it?" argued she. "Am I to make myself disagreeable to people because they admire me?" And so, when Mr. Dunbar called, Miss Vane was so charming; when he left she was so sorry, that he called again and again, and the sly little damsel laughed in her sleeve.

Mrs. Brittain seldom attended parties of any kind, but she went to the Quodlibet, at her son's earnest solicitation, and felt herself amply repaid. Not that she was particularly edified by Miss Edna's discourse, but her fears were relieved by witnessing Harry's naughty behavior; for Mrs. Brittain held nearly the same opinion of Miss Vane that Miss Edna did. "I shall never dream of danger there, again," said the anxious mother to herself. "Even Mrs.

Fanning cannot make Sylvo fall in love with such a hoyden." Yet, notwithstanding this security, Mrs. Brittain could not resist the desire to have it confirmed by her son.

"What a pity," said she to him the next day, "What a great pity Mrs. Fanning is not at home to take charge of her niece."

"Yes, it is."

"I do not by any means approve of her management in all respects, but I know that anything like romping, or undignified behavior she would never permit. Miss Vane is nothing to me, but for the credit of my own sex I wish there were some one to exercise control over her. The Poinsetts do not pretend to do it."

"I should think it would be much pleasanter for her at Fanning House," said her son; "those Poinsett boys are so bad, particularly John."

"She is as bad as he, it seems."

"She? Why, surely ma'am, you do not think she had anything to do with hiding Johnnie under the sofa? I do not think she was guilty of anything worse than occasionally dropping him a piece of cake."

"Think? Sylvo, I *know* the idea originated with her; Edna acknowledged as much, and she certainly has opportunities of knowing that girl's character." Mrs. Brittain was becoming uneasy.

"I do not believe it," said Mr. Brittain. "You know Miss Edna is not lenient."

"Oh! Sylvo! Why should you justify that school-girl?"

"She is hardly more than a school-girl, it is true; but I cannot think she would be guilty of such rudeness. I thought her very lady-like, but then she may have been on her good behavior before me." Mrs. Brittain had rendered her son skeptical about young ladies.

"You may be very sure she was," said Mrs. Brittain, with energy.

"Are you not going to see her, ma'am?" asked her son, after a pause.

"I do not see the slightest necessity for my doing so," said she, with growing uneasiness.

"Well; as you please," said her son, putting on his hat. "I do not suppose she would care very much about it, though she seems to be a nice little girl. I dare say she

will make a fine woman." And having thus unwittingly stuck a dagger in his mother's heart, he went away.

Poor Mrs. Brittain! The danger in her eyes was as great as ever, as her saturated pocket-handkerchief testified. She firmly resolved never to visit Miss Vane, never to invite Miss Vane to visit her.

But Miss Vane came uninvited, and the cause of her visit was a misfortune that befell little Davy. That child of the constant heart had clung with unwavering affection to his earless and tailless pet, the cat Lepsy, fighting her battles manfully, and maintaining her claim to beauty with as earnest zeal as ever Don Quixote did for his Dulcinea. Every one wished Lepsy dead, but no one had the heart to kill her. Poor little Davy, in his anxiety to improve her health was hastening her end as fast as he could by the dreadful remedies he forced her to submit to. There came a day at length when Lepsy was to die.

It was Saturday, and early in the morning. Fitful gusts of wind blew the gathering rain-clouds across the sky, swung the cedar branches roughly, and scattered the syringa blossoms on the garden-walk. Flocks of pigeons dived and wheeled about in the air, settled for a moment, and then whirled away again. The poultry kept up an incessant clamor, occasionally heightened by the sharp bark of two or three dogs at the kitchen-door.

Davy sat on the piazza-steps eating a biscuit baked expressly for his benefit; near him lay the yellow kitten in a very feeble condition. He offered her a crumb now and then, and seeing her make some convulsive movements, flattered himself that Lepsy was growing playful. His foot was beating time to his happy thoughts, when Sam, the house-boy, passing by on his way to the kitchen, said to a fellow-servant,

"Tildy, that ar yaller kitten is got a fit; I said so when I seed it a eatin' grass this mornin'."

Davy picked up a chip lying near, and sent it after Sam with the quietly indignant command,

"You shet up!"

The chip struck Sam in the back, and sent him reeling with laughter into the kitchen, whence he presently issued with a plate of hot waffles.

Davy was reluctantly settling into the conviction that Sam's opinion was not altogether without foundation, eyeing

his kitten with uneasy dismay, when Sam coming up the steps struck his foot on the mat, upon the extreme edge of which poor Lepsy had writhed in the last fatal convulsion.

With a yell of rage and despair which set the noisy gobbler to lead off all the poultry in chorus, and old Sancho, a superannuated hound reposing at the end of the piazza, to howl in concert, Davy stretched himself across his dying pet, and belabored Sam's shins vigorously with his little fists. Surprised by this sudden attack, and thrown off his balance by his little master's furious onslaught, Sam tottered, and though he saved the plate, he lost the waffles.

Old Sancho cut short his sympathizing howl in the midst of a magnificent crescendo, and came to gobble them up. The clatter of the fowls, the howling, and, above all, Davy's terrible outcry, called all parties to the scene of action. The children came running up, Mrs. Poinsett hurried across the yard, seemingly propelled by a little gust of wind, and Mr. Poinsett came out, his spectacles in one hand, and the Planter's Journal in the other; but when he heard that the yellow kitten was dead, he went in again with a fervent ejaculation of thanksgiving. The others, more sympathizing or more curious, gathered round, as Sam, stooping over Lepsy's lifeless body, was saying,

"Deed, Mars Davy, I didn't do it; I wouldn't ha' killed your cat, no how."

"You did! You just stove your big old foot against her as hard as ever you could."

"What is the matter? What is all this noise about? I will not have such a noise," cried Mrs. Poinsett. "What is all this fuss about? What is *that*?" demanded she, in an awful voice, pointing to a great grease-spot on the piazza-floor.

"Dem's de waffles what Sancho eat," said Tildy.

"What?" said Mrs. Poinsett.

"Sam he drop de waffles down dar, an' Sancho he come an' eat 'em up," explained Tildy.

"How came Sam to drop them?"

Tildy giggled, and threw her apron over her head.

"Sam kicked Lepsy, and now she is dead; and I hit him for it!" gasped Davy amid thick-coming sobs.

"Well, well; hush Davy," said his mother; "it could not be helped. Sam, go throw the creature away."

"My Lepsy is not a *creature!*" shrieked Davy. "She shall be buried under a rose-bush."

It was useless to expostulate with him. Davy was not to be deterred from conferring the rites of Christian burial upon Lepsy by argument, nor yet by ridicule. Mrs. Poinsett yielded a reluctant consent, stipulating, however, that Lepsy's grave should be in a remote corner of the garden, and that the funeral should not take place until after breakfast.

Harry, unaffectedly touched by that constancy which bribes, nor threats, nor ridicule could ever shake, comforted the bereaved Davy more than any one else. Her tender hands did not disdain the office of preparing the dead kitten for burial in a cigar-box, and at Davy's earnest request she consented to attend the funeral. Mortimer having lately entered Mr. Lane's school, was free from Miss Edna's Saturday morning tasks, and kindly volunteered to dig the grave.

Immediately after breakfast the funeral party, consisting of Harry and the children, wound its way through the mist into the garden. The place of sepulture was in a distant corner which adjoined a piece of ground belonging to Mrs. Brittain's premises. This piece of ground was planted in fruit trees, upon which Mr. Brittain was fond of performing experiments. Now Mr. Kennett was in town on a visit to the Professor, and was exploring this little orchard in company with his friend, when Lepsy was brought forth for burial. Mr. Kennett was the first to see the melancholy party, and he called Mr. Brittain's attention to their solemn faces.

"Sylvo, what do you suppose Miss Vane is doing there?"

"I do not know; planting flowers, probably," said Mr. Brittain. "I wish you would come and look at these new grafts."

"The mischief take the grafts! They can wait; come here and watch these children."

"Ralph, how can you be so impertinent? come away and let them alone; Miss Vane would be very indignant."

"And indignation is so becoming to her," said Mr. Kennett, carelessly. "Off to the house with you, you dull old book-worm! As for me, I shall stay to study human nature."

And while Mr. Brittain walked away, he hid among the quince bushes and peeped through the palings. The children were not near enough for him to hear what was said, nor even to see clearly what was done, but his curiosity was only stimulated by the difficulty of interpreting the scene. So he remained securely concealed, while the funeral ceremonies went on.

Davy desired a hymn to be sung and a sermon to be preached; but Mortimer, having acquitted himself with great credit the day before in the "Burial of Sir John Moore," decided in favor of what he called an oration. So,

"We buried him darkly at dead of night,  
The sod with our bayonets turning,"—

was given with great unction. Davy probably did not perceive its applicability to Lepsy's case in all points, but he acknowledged that it sounded very grand, and he was satisfied.

Not so Mr. Kennett. Harry's face and Mortimer's gesture puzzled him exceedingly. He had almost come to the determination to enter the garden and inquire the meaning of the strange proceedings, when Mortimer brought his oration to a close, and John handed Harry a shingle. The children crowded around her as she bent her head over it for a few moments, and Mr. Kennett changed his mind and decided to remain where he was. He saw her, still surrounded by the children, stoop on the damp ground, and presently rise and go away, holding Davy by the hand, and the others following after. The shingle was left sticking upright in the ground, and the son of Eve pushed off a paling and walked into the Poinsett's garden to read the inscription:

LEPSY,  
Favorite Cat  
OF  
DAVID POINSETT.

Having once buried a pet squirrel himself, Mr. Kennett could appreciate poor Davy's feelings. But he did not think of Davy at all when he read his name on the shingle, but of her who had written Lepsy's epitaph with so grave a face. "Well!" said he, laughing, as he climbed through

the fence, "this is a pretty piece of business for a man to be engaged in! But I am satisfied; I did want to know what she was doing."

"Where have you been, Mr. Kennett?" asked Mrs. Brittain; "seeking an appetite for breakfast I suppose? It is very damp to be taking a walk."

"I have been attending funeral, madam," said he with a very grave face.

"Ah? Dear me, who is dead?" asked she, in alarm.

"One of the well-known family of Felis. I was an uninvited, unseen attendant, but by no means an uninterested one. Sylvo, you should have stayed."

"Felis, or Felix, did you say?" asked Mrs. Brittain. "I suppose they are visiting here."

Mr. Brittain laughed. "How can you let him impose upon you so?" said he. "He is talking about a cat the Poinsett children were interring in their garden."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Brittain, "you spoke as if it were a human being."

"I assure you, my dear madam," said Mr. Kennett, "that I was so impressed with the fact that Miss Lepsy Felis was a human being, from the behavior of her mourners, that nothing but the inscription on her tombstone, declaring her to be a cat, could have disabused my mind of that belief. Sylvo, I declare she was as solemn as a judge all through, and one of the boys made a speech, or preached a sermon, what it was I could not well hear, except the closing words,

'We left him alone in his glory.'

I wonder if anything could have made her laugh? I mean to ask her the next time I see her, if she believes in the *Metempsychosis*."

"Whom do you mean?" asked Mrs. Brittain, in trepidation.

"Miss Vane, madam; Miss Harry Vane; the most amusing, delightful, original young lady" —

"A mere school-girl," said Mrs. Brittain, contemptuously, "with all a school-girl's ways."

Mr. Kennett only laughed. He knew Mrs. Brittain's weakness, and he said no more.

The clouds descended in an April rain, and by mid-day the sky was clear and the sun shining brightly. Poor little

Davy spent all that rainy morning in-doors, and was a great trial to everybody. Rainy mornings had always been dreaded by the family on account of Lepsy; but they now found that Davy without Lepsy, was infinitely worse than Davy with Lepsy; most welcome, therefore, was the sunshine, when he could be sent out to play. But Davy could not play, and Harry seeing him so forlorn, thought the best she could do to comfort him would be to procure him a kitten to take Lepsy's place. She remembered to have heard that Mrs. Brittain had some beautiful tortoise-shell kittens, so that afternoon, picking her way over the damp Bermuda grass which threatened to overrun the Terrace, she came to Mrs. Brittain's gate.

Now all the Netherford ladies were wonderful gardeners, and Mrs. Brittain was taking advantage of the shower to have some seed sown. Mr. Brittain and Mr. Kennett, however, were in the sitting-room. "The Professor at home" was an idea which never occurred to Harry's imagination, and Mr. Kennett was the very last person she expected to see, but when she did see him, she had eyes for no one else.

"Oh! how do you do!" she cried; "I am so glad to see you. When did you come? Shall not we have our picnic now?"

This picnic had been the beacon of her hopes for many days, and the sight of Mr. Kennett seemed to bring it so near that Davy and his kitten were forgotten.

"Miss Vane!" said Mr. Kennett, in a very grave voice, "I am shocked at you; I had not supposed you capable of such volatility."

"Why?" said Harry, turning slightly pale, and then very red, "you promised to have a picnic of your own accord. I did not ask you; what harm can there be in my reminding you of it?"

"Oh! I wish Ralph would not do that—teasing that child so," thought Mr. Brittain, as he saw Harry's embarrassment.

"Did I not see you this very morning," said Mr. Kennett, "grieving at a funeral; and now you are wanting to go to a picnic! Oh! Miss Harry! Miss Harry!"

"O—h!" said Harry, beginning to smile, "who told you about that?"

"I saw for myself; I was in the orchard, and I witnessed the whole performance, and I could have laughed myself



sick ; but you looked so solemn, one would have thought the cat was akin to you."

" Ah ! I could not laugh," said Harry. " Poor little Davy was so sorry ! And then Mortimer repeated such a beautiful piece of poetry ! To be sure, it did not apply to Lepsy, but it was all about a soldier's burial, and I felt as if I was one of his comrades burying him. I do not know what it was ; I never heard it before."

Mr. Brittain turned away his head that she might not see him smile, but Mr. Kennett laughed outright.

" You don't mean to say," said he, " that Mortimer was reciting ' Sir John Moore ' over Miss Lepsy ? "

" Ah ! do not laugh," said Harry ; " Davy was better pleased than if we had come away without a word ; and we could not have prayers, you know, so that did as well as anything else."

" It was extremely suitable, Miss Harry, especially the verse,

' We thought as we hollowed his narrow bed,  
And smoothed down his lonely pillow,  
That the foe and the stranger would tread o'er his head,  
And we far away on the billow.'

For as soon as you were gone I went in and read her epitaph. I never felt so like a rogue since the last time I robbed an orchard."

" I do not like to see people laugh at everything," said Harry. " It was such a loss to poor little Davy, he was so fond of his cat. I came here to ask Mrs. Brittain for a kitten for him ; do you think I can get one, Mr. Brittain ? "

" Oh, yes," said Mr. Brittain ; " we have any number here."

" Good evening," said Mrs. Brittain, stiffly, as she came into the room.

Harry offered her hand, and with the fearlessness of ignorance and innocence, said eagerly,

" Oh ! Mrs. Brittain, can you not give me a kitten for Davy ? His cat — his pet cat — is dead."

Mrs. Brittain thought the kitten a mere pretext, and determined not to give it. " I am sorry," she said, " but I have promised all I have to Nick Bayne's children."

" Oh, surely you can let her have one," said her son, troubled by her cold manner.

" No," said his inflexible mother, polite, but freezing, " I cannot. I have but three, and I have promised them away."

Harry looked blank. "I am sorry," she said simply; "but it cannot be helped," and she rose to go.


"Miss Harry, you shall not be disappointed," said Mr. Kennett. "Where is my hat? I will ransack the town but that you shall have a kitten for Davy before night." And he and Harry went forth together.

"I did not think Mr. Kennett could be so silly," said Mrs. Brittain. "However it is no affair of mine."

Mr. Kennett did procure a kitten for Davy, to Mrs. Poinsett's great vexation. It arrived late that evening, but the next morning it had disappeared! Whether it had come to a violent end, or had run away, was never discovered.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HARRY'S PICNIC.

 R. KENNETT had really forgotten the picnic until he met Harry at Mrs. Brittain's. He found such entertainments very tiresome, but willing to gratify her, he went immediately home to make all necessary arrangements for fulfilling his promise, and one bright morning he appeared at Mr. Poinsett's door to take Harry to Hazlewood.

"Remember, now, Ralph," his sister had said, as he drove off, "it is to be a select affair; we will not have such people as the Innibeas are famous for inviting, so be careful how you speak of it. And you need not mention it to the Poinsetts; they will be bringing that crowd of children."

"No danger," was his reply. "I am no more anxious to have them than are you."

Harry had for days been expecting a summons to Hazlewood, and when Mr. Kennett was announced, she came down all equipped for the ride. She found Miss Edna in the parlor with him, but not imagining that she could take

any interest in the enjoyments of youth, she did not understand Mr. Kennett's attempts to prevent all mention of the picnic, or rather she misunderstood them.

"What is the matter?" said she, "are we not to have the picnic after all?"

"A picnic?" cried Miss Edna. "It will be the first of the season. How delightful is a *fête champêtre au printemps*. When is it to be?"

"We have been talking about it for some time past," said Mr. Kennett, evasively.

"Such delightful weather," said Miss Edna: "surely you should take advantage of it."

"We could hardly expect you to be of the party," said Mr. Kennett.

"Oh! yes, indeed! we shall all be delighted to go. When and where is it to be?"

"Day after to-morrow, at Hazlewood," said Mr. Kennett, with an attempt at cordiality. "Miss Harry, I am sorry to hurry you, but we should be going."

"I have only to get my hat and gloves," cried she, "I will be with you in a moment."

"It is a great pity," remarked Miss Edna, as Harry left the room, "that Mrs. Fanning sets no value by intellectual culture. That girl is growing up like a weed."

"I am more inclined to compare her to a wild-flower," said Mr. Kennett.

"*Chacun a son gout*," said Miss Edna, "but wild flowers are not prized like cultivated ones."

"I am ready," cried Harry, gayly, and as they left, Miss Edna assured Mr. Kennett that she would not fail to attend the picnic.

"Why did you ask her?" said Harry, as soon as they were seated in the buggy.

"How could I help it? Did you not betray the secret before I knew what you would say?"

"Who would have thought she would wish to go to a picnic? She is such an intellectual person."

"Then you do not think a picnic an intellectual enjoyment, nor any of us who are going, intellectual people?"

"Oh, nonsense! Not in Miss Edna's way I mean. And you only asked her for politeness."

"Of course. I could not avoid it. Lou charged me not to ask them; she does not fancy those children."

"Oh! I am so sorry," said Harry. — "It was just like me to be so inconsiderate."

"Do not distress yourself. I think those boys will stand in awe of me."

The long-expected morning dawned fair and breezy, giving promise of a perfect day. So restless was Harry, that she could not sleep. She rose with the sun, and busied herself stemming strawberries until breakfast was announced.

"Harry, run dress yourself, child, or you will keep us waiting," said Mrs. Dean.

"Dress?" cried Harry, glancing at her neat, Spring calico and fancy apron, "I am dressed."

"Sallie!" cried Mrs. Dean, "do come here and convince Harry that her costume is not suitable for company."

Miss Hart appeared in a lavender barège, flounced with black, a long black sash, and an elaborate lace collar. Mrs. Dean was dressed in a similar style; both were as showy as the latest fashion-plate.

"Do go, my dear," said Mrs. Dean, "and put on that lovely green organdie you showed me yesterday, and those dear little slippers; how can you dance in those clumsy morocco shoes?"

"But we shall be in the woods," objected Harry. "Mr. Kennett, do I not look well enough in this dress?"

"How should he know?" said Mrs. Dean, impatiently.

"Harry you *must* change your dress. Mrs. Fanning would never forgive me if I permitted you to go thus."

"No, no, no!" said Harry, jumping into the carriage.

Mrs. Dean frowned and sighed; Mr. Kennett laughed. "Let her alone," said he, "her dress is very appropriate and very becoming."

"Harry," said Mrs. Dean, "are you not going in the buggy with Ralph?"

"Sallie is going with him," said Harry. "Why do we not start? Oh! there he comes. What in the world will he do with those things?" cried she, in amazement as he began to load the front seats with backgammon boxes, chessmen and boards, grace-hoops, cards, and so forth. "Why do you carry those things, Mr. Kennett?"

"Why, that people may enjoy themselves."

"But those games are to be enjoyed within doors."

"Why not out of doors, also?"

"Where is the use of going to the woods to enjoy what you may have in the house?"

"You will discover in time, Miss Harry. I fear your idea of a picnic is too original to find favor with all. These things must go for those who cannot amuse themselves after your fashion."

"Come, Ralph, let us waste no more time," said Mrs. Dean. "We should be the first there."

"Good-by, Mr. Dean, poor Mr. Dean," said Harry, gayly.

The grove in which the picnic was to take place, seemed to have been made for such gatherings. The shade was so dense that no arbor was required to cover the platform for the dancers, and the ground was perfectly smooth and level except on one side, where a beautiful slope led down to a spring of icy cold water. Here the refreshments were deposited in charge of two or three servants.

Mr. Kennett had made every arrangement for the comfort and convenience of the guests, and Harry declared that, so far, everything had surpassed her expectations. She tried the floor of the platform where they were to dance, and pronounced it delightfully springy; she sat in the swing, and declared it to be exactly in the right place; she praised the wooden benches and chairs, and had hardly done admiring and exploring, when some carriages drove up. Foremost among them was Mr. Poinsett's, containing Miss Edna, Blanche, John and Davy; and then another, from which sprang Mr. Sutton, Mr. Paul, Miss Emily, and lastly, Miss Grace, chattering volubly. They lingered around the carriage a few minutes while Mr. Sutton groped about among the cushions, from whence he presently drew forth a flute for Mr. Paul, a sketch-book and porte-crayon for Miss Emily, a roll of music for Miss Grace, and a guitar for himself.

"Just look at that, now!" said Harry, with ill-concealed impatience, "I wish some one would sit on that guitar."

"Oh, no! Miss Harry," said Mr. Kennett, "that would put Mr. Sutton in an ill-humor for the rest of the day."

"My dear creature!" cried Miss Grace, advancing, "what a *delicieuxment* time we are going to have!" Miss Grace was not equal to Miss Edna in French. "We have learned a lovely quartette for this very occasion; we were so afraid we would not know it, we practised till ten o'clock last night."

People now began to arrive rapidly, almost every one with baskets of strawberries or other provisions, which were

immediately sent off to the spring. Harry was astonished at the profusion of ribbons, flounces, and lace. At first, every one wandered about as if they did not know what to be doing.

"Why do not they begin to enjoy themselves?" asked she.

"Oh, give them time," said Mr. Kennett; "my musicians will be here pretty soon, and then you will see them throw off this stiffness."

Meanwhile, Harry sought a seat on the mossy roots of a huge oak, through the leaves of which, a stray sunbeam shed a golden lustre on her beautiful head. Blanche, finding no one nearer her own age than Harry, seated herself also at the foot of the oak, whither Davy followed her. Harry was thankful that John preferred exploring the grounds. He wandered about, uncertain what to do with himself, but ever on the alert for some opportunity to commit mischief. Presently appeared Mr. Dunbar, elaborately dressed, and Harry beheld with uneasiness, Master Jack following in his footsteps, for well she knew that Mr. Dunbar would stop at her oak.

"Good morning, Miss Harry,!" cried he, as he drew near. "I hope you are well, ma'am? a strawberry picnic I heard this was to be, but as I have only one small square set out last fall, I could bring but a scanty contribution, you see. I have intended them for you only. They are very fine, though they are so few." And he drew from his pocket a paper horn, the contents of which could be easily guessed from the exterior, for in their transportation the strawberries had been much bruised.

"Just try them!" he cried, with exultation. "I never thought much of strawberries till I went to the fair at Argentum last fall, and they showed me some preserved ones so fine I thought I'd plant some. I ordered a lot right away, and they are just beginning to bear."

"Oh! thank you," said Harry, who felt no inclination to taste them. "Here, Davy, have some strawberries?"

"And I'll see if I don't have my share!" cried John, snatching at the paper which Harry dexterously let fall on the ground.

"You awkward boy! And you had not tasted one of them, Miss Harry," said Mr. Dunbar.

"And they were so large," said Harry.

Mr. Dunbar was flattered. "Do you know, Miss Harry," said he, in a low tone, "I am a very domestic man? I am so fond of flowers and fruit and poultry."

"Are you, indeed?"

"Yes. I really think a man with domestic habits and tastes has a great deal to recommend him."

"What is that?" said Mr. Kennett, coming behind Harry's chair. "You certainly are not trying to find favor with Miss Vane on the score of domestic tastes? Why she is not at all domestic; she told me the other day, that she had a serious idea of going on the stage."

Mr. Dunbar could never take a joke; his look of horror almost upset Harry, and caused her to hide her face in her hat. But Mr. Kennett continued as gravely as a judge, "She cannot determine whether she is to be a *cantatrice* or a *danseuse*, but we are to practise both arts here to-day that she may have an opportunity to decide."

The ringing of a triangle, and the scraping of a fiddle, drew Mr. Kennett off to attend to the placing of his band, as he called the two negroes who supplied the music. As soon as he was gone, Mr. Dunbar turned to Harry, and with great earnestness, said to her,

"Miss Harry, you are so young, take the advice of a sincere friend, — of, — in fact, I may say, a — a — an admirer, ahem! Give up this ruinous notion of going on the stage."

"Oh!" said Harry, "I should have to go through a year or two of study first, you know."

"And I suppose this is Mr. Kennett's advice?"

"Yes," said Harry, struggling with a laugh.

"Miss Harry, let me warn you, he is a dangerous man. He has travelled about the world till his sense of refinement, of — of propriety — is completely destroyed."

"Come, Miss Harry," said Mr. Kennett, "they are waiting for us to form the first set."

"I — I — I thought I was to have the honor of dancing with you," stammered Mr. Dunbar.

"I promised Mr. Kennett two weeks ago," said Harry.

"Yes, indeed, it is an old engagement. Sorry for your disappointment, but get a partner and join this set." And Mr. Kennett hurried Harry off. Before they reached the platform they were arrested by a shout of merriment, and turning to seek the cause, they beheld at a little distance, poor Mr. Dunbar floundering and stumbling about in the

most unaccountable manner. From their position, they could not clearly discover what was the matter, for at every movement he made, the crowd renewed their laughter and drew closer around him.

"What is the matter?" said Harry, in alarm. "Has he got a fit?"

"Oh! you dear, delightful, little rogue," said Miss Emily, tapping Harry's cheek with the pencil with which she had just completed a sketch of the spring, (which was as like that particular spring as any other,) "oh! you dear, innocent little rogue, to ask such a question! Mr. Kennett it was a scene worthy the pencil of a Wilkie. Mr. Dunbar's coat-flaps were pinned so ingeniously to the back of his chair, that he never suspected it until he tried to walk, and then, poor man, he could not imagine what was the matter. Ah, you sly puss!" shaking her pencil at Harry.

Harry turned very red, and was about to speak, but a voice in a group near by caused her to pause. It was Miss Edna speaking.

"I do not feel the slightest sympathy for him; the idea of a man of his years making such a simpleton of himself by playing the devoted to a child just out of boarding-school. No! no! It serves him just right! He is old enough to know that she would play off some *méchanceté*."

"Let us go," said Mr. Kennett; "Mr. Dunbar, it seems, has extricated himself."

"It was John!" said Harry, in a voice of suppressed anger.

"What? It was not you?" said Mr. Kennett, provokingly.

"You *know* better!" said Harry. "The odious, tiresome old thing! I should think myself perfectly justifiable in doing anything to rid myself of him and his mashed strawberries, but it mortifies me to know that any one would think me capable of such an unlady-like performance."

"He cannot think so, Miss Harry, but if you wish it, I will undertake to assure him of your innocence."

"Thank you; it is not worth while. I was angry, but it is all over now, and I believe I could laugh as much as any one."

The dance began; but Harry, in spite of her assertion, was in no humor to enjoy it, and it was nearly dinner, or lunch time, before her wonted serenity was restored.



While the musicians were dining, cards, backgammon and chess were in great demand; and then some one proposed a waltz, but Tim and Lewis knew but one or two tunes in the wide world, and so Miss Grace with her guitar, and Mr. Paul with his flute, supplied waltzes, while Miss Hart, who waltzed beautifully, and Mr. Sutton, who was indefatigable, whirled around until every one was dizzy with watching them. Then, as soon as Mr. Sutton had recovered his breath, Miss Grace proposed the "lovely quartette," which was received with great applause. It was followed by numerous songs from various persons, and then it was repeated by request.

Meanwhile, Mr. Kennett found himself near a company of card-players, of whom Miss Edna and Mr. Dunbar were members. They did not confine themselves to whist or euchre; they were talking with far more interest than they were playing.

"Indeed," said Miss Emily Innibee, "I think he is smitten."

"He has a very bad influence on her," said Mr. Dunbar, "he has persuaded her to go on the stage."

"*He!*" said Miss Edna, shuffling the cards. "She is not indebted to him for the suggestion, I will answer for it; she is headlong and giddy enough for anything, as your coat-flaps can testify, perhaps, Mr. Dunbar."

"A — hem!" said Mr. Dunbar, "I have my suspicions that she had nothing to do with that; in fact, it was somebody who shall be nameless, Miss Edna."

Miss Edna laughed derisively. "It seems you have *des préjugés en sa faveur* as well as Mr. Ken —"

"Sh — h!" said Miss Emily, "here he is!"

"What is the subject of discussion, ladies?" said Mr. Kennett.

"A very trifling thing," said Miss Edna, "a mere *vétille*."

"Hem!" said Miss Emily, "Mr. Kennett and Mr. Dunbar will not agree with you."

Miss Edna shuffled away as if it were a matter of indifference to her.

"She is so young," said Mr. Dunbar, "and time works wonders; under proper influence she will improve."

"*J'en doute*," said Miss Edna, shrugging her shoulders, "she has been so long at boarding-school that she is utterly beyond reach of improvement."

"Whom are you so severe upon, Miss Edna?" asked Mr. Kennett.

"A young lady, who, by all accounts, has perfectly bewitched you."

"Oh!" said Mr. Kennett, laughing, "that is an old story; is there no new feature in it?"

"Yes," said Miss Edna, throwing her cards on the table, and turning sharply upon him, "there is a new feature in this case, new at least to you, for though young ladies often have two strings to their bow, it is generally supposed about here, that young ladies who make *beaux yeux* at Mr. Kennett have eyes for no one else."

"Oh! novelty is always delightful, and Miss Vane is so charming that if she will permit me to be *one* of her strings, I care not how many she has."

"It seems there are others of the same opinion."

"That is not improbable."

Miss Emily and Mr. Dunbar strolled away, and Miss Edna took from her pocket an envelope directed to herself, and said, as she displayed it.

"Perhaps this contains something of interest to you; what would you give to see it?"

"Give? you know I am as curious as Eve. What *billet-doux* have you received that could be of moment to me?"

"Well, *le voilà!* you may judge for yourself."

Mr. Kennett took the note, glanced over it, and said, smiling, "I cannot possibly understand why you show this to me, Miss Edna."

It was evidently written by some ardent admirer; some very young person, to judge from the style in which it was worded, and it was signed "*Henry Thorne.*"

"You are dull indeed!" said Miss Edna. "Look on the back—not of the envelope, but the note. Is my name 'Harry,' or 'Vane?'"

Mr. Kennett's face flushed as he gave it back. "Had I not supposed it yours, I never would have read it," said he.

"Well, it is mine; she herself put it under my door."

"By mistake, I suppose," said Mr. Kennett. "It should be returned to her."

"No," said Miss Edna, "I am not so *sotte* as that. I think it my duty to show it to her uncle and aunt as soon as they return."

"I am neither her uncle nor her aunt," said Mr. Kennett, haughtily; "and I very much regret that I have been betrayed into the discovery of Miss Vane's secret."

"It was sweet to be blind," said Miss Edna, maliciously.

"I do not approve of having my eyes opened in this way," said Mr. Kennett, rising to make room for some weary promenaders.

Glad of an excuse to leave Miss Edna, he withdrew at the approach of her friends, and strolled through the grove.

After all, except the name "Henry Thorne," the note said no more than Sallie Hart had already hinted. But should he tell Harry? As he weighed this question, there arose a clamor in the grove, shrieks of terror, entreaties for protection. Hats were trampled under foot, flounces torn; suddenly the crowd parted, and the cause of the panic was disclosed in the person of Master Jack, who carried on a stick a huge snake he had just killed. He had selected Harry for his victim, who, pale and trembling, leaned against a tree incapable of resistance. As her tormentor approached, she stretched forth her hands with a wild, imploring gesture, and seeing that he still advanced, she covered her face and burst into tears.

"You bad boy!" said Mr. Kennett, giving John a vigorous shake. "You deserve a sound whipping, and I have a great mind to administer it."

"Dear Miss Vane," cried Mr. Dunbar, running up, "how frightened you was; you might have known I would not let him throw it on you."

"Thank you," said Harry, wiping her eyes, "I thought you quite as much frightened as myself. I am very much obliged to you," continued she, turning away from Mr. Dunbar and addressing Mr. Kennett, "and very much ashamed of myself; but I do believe if I had not given up and cried, I should have fainted, and I should have hated that."

"La! Harry," cried Sallie Hart, now coming forward, "how pale you are!" then catching her by the arm, she whispered, "Do rally your spirits, child; yonder are Miss Edna and Grace Innibee saying it was all affectation."

Harry's face was anything but pale now. She jerked away from Miss Hart, not very gently, and blind with indignation, she suffered Mr. Kennett to lead her away, she knew not where.

"Well," said he, when they had walked almost to the confines of the grove, "you do not feel like fainting now, do you?"

"I think you might have found something more agreeable to say; I suppose you think it was affectation too?"

"No, I do not."

"I am glad you do not; I do not care what Miss Edna or what Grace Innibee says."

"How strange it is that I should feel flattered by what this child says," thought Mr. Kennett.

Harry went on to say, "I have always had the greatest horror of a snake; and strange as it may seem, I dread a dead one more than a live one. I know it cannot hurt me, but the idea that it should touch me, fills me with unspeakable disgust."

"That John is the greatest young mischief I ever saw."

"He is always doing such things," said Harry, "I suppose he cannot help it; but I wish he had stayed at home."

The sun was now creeping down the west, and some of the company were talking of leaving, when the sound of wheels approaching, caused Harry and Mr. Kennett to look around. At a little distance, they beheld an antiquated rockaway drawn by a huge, raw-boned horse, and driven by a very small boy. The rockaway stopped not ten paces from them. Mr. Kennett started forward, but not in time to assist the occupant to alight.

She was a short, stout old lady, dressed in an old-fashioned, brocaded gray silk, a huge bonnet, gold-rimmed spectacles on her nose, a pair of coarse, pick-net gloves on her hands, one of which held a turkey-tail fan of enormous proportions, and the other a bead bag of gorgeous colors. Harry recognized Mrs. Marshall at once, from Grace Innibee's description, and was curious to see how Mr. Kennett would comport himself; Mrs. Dean, she had already seen descend the hill in company with Sallie Hart, as soon as the rockaway came in sight. But Mr. Kennett not only evinced no desire to avoid his aunt, but even seemed anxious that Miss Vane should meet her also; for he turned back when he saw that he was too late to assist her, and drawing Harry's hand within his arm, hurried to meet her.

"Well, Ralph, my boy," said the little old lady, in a brisk voice, nodding her head as she came, "so you are having a fine time of it here, and a nice, pretty place for a picnic, too. You see I bear you no malice for not inviting me, and I don't stand on ceremony, either," and she gave him a hearty kiss.

"I am glad you do not," said he, "but as I invited none of your boys, I thought you would not care to come."

"Very disrespectful of you, Ralph; but who is this?"

"Miss Vane," said Mr. Kennett, introducing Harry.

"Miss Vane? Tut, tut; Harriet Fanning, you mean?" said the old lady, raising her hands to adjust her spectacles, by which action not her face only, but her whole head and shoulders were for a moment obscured by the enormous fan and bag.

"Am I so like my mother?" said Harry.

"Like! As like as two peas in a pod! You carry me back twenty years." And she took Harry's face between her hands and gave her as hearty a kiss as she had bestowed on her nephew.

Mr. Kennett laughed.

"La! child," continued Mrs. Marshall, "your mother was the liveliest and best-hearted girl in all this Ominihaw Country; everybody loved her, and truly, I don't think anything could go on without her."

"I cannot remember my mother," said Harry, "she died when I was so young."

"I can remember her, I can tell you, and you are just like her."

"I wish there was time for you to tell me all you remember about her," said Harry, eagerly.

"Lord, child!" said Mrs. Marshall, with a laugh, "that would take from now till never!" But you come and see me, and I'll tell you a plenty about her."

"Come, sit down, Aunt," said Mr. Kennett, "and have some strawberries."

"No, I'm obliged to you, I do just as well standing. Well now it's a pretty sight to see, to be sure, all these young folks enjoying themselves. Well, well, I like to see it. I never feel any spite at youth because I'm old. One can't be young but once, and so one should enjoy youth while one has it; that's what I tell the Faculty when they come down on my boys so hard."

Mr. Kennett laughed. "I see those boys have thoroughly imbued you with their doctrine of 'go it while you're young.'"

"Yes, and a very good doctrine, too."

"Miss Harry, you have no idea how she indulges those collegians."

"Ah — well, poor fellows" —

"But come, sit down, we can talk just as well — and Louisa is here."

"Louisa is *not* here, I understand; not your fault. Besides, it is about time for me to be going. One of my boys that was rusticated out here at Campbell's is down with the measles, and I have been to see him."

"Ah! I thought one of those boys was in the case! and you have ridden fifteen miles just to see some worthless fellow who deserves to be expelled, I dare say. Who is it?"

"Well now Ralph," said the old lady, soothingly, "you must not be too hard; you see it is a young man just lately come. He belongs to the law school, and I'm very much afraid, Ralph, he will give somebody the heartache, for he will drink. He got on a spree and went to Campbell's of his own accord."

"Had the grace to retire. What is his name?"

"Thorne, Henry Thorne."

Mr. Kennett started and looked at Harry involuntarily; but she did not change color at all. He was almost inclined to think Miss Edna's note a forgery, when she said, very quietly,

"I know him."

"Where did you know him?" said Mrs. Marshall.

"I knew him when I was at school."

"And what do you know of him?" said the little old lady, with a searching look.

"Nothing particularly," said Harry, coloring, "I did not know he drank."

"I am afraid he is a wild young bird," said Mrs. Marshall. "But I am forgetting the business that brought me here; Ralph, I want you to let me have a cow, my boy."

"Certainly, you shall, Aunt Marshall," said her nephew; "half a dozen, if you like."

"One will be sufficient," said she, gravely; and Harry strayed away that she might offer no restraint to their conversation.

"Well!" said she, presently, "farewell, it is time for me to go. Good-by to you, Miss Vane. Heaven bless the child, how much she is like her mother. Come to see me when you come to town."

"What a dear, nice old lady," said Harry, when the rockaway drove off.

"She is one of the best of women!" said Mr. Kennett, warmly. "Her life has been a long duty, faithfully performed; a long trial, patiently and cheerfully borne. Ever since the college was established here, she has kept a students' boarding-house to support a bed-ridden husband. Never did a boy become a member of her family, but he had good cause to feel for her a lasting friendship; a more kind-hearted creature never lived. As for me, I owe her a debt of gratitude I never can repay. Her antiquated dress and homely countenance are not calculated to prepossess strangers in her favor, but for me, her dear old face has more of that beauty wherewith I imagine the angels to shine than any young lady's I ever saw."

Had he looked at Harry when he ceased, he might have made an exception in her favor; for her eyes were shining with a dewy light, the color came and went in her eager face with every pulsation of her sympathizing heart, and her beautiful lips trembled with feelings to which she could give no utterance. But he did not look at her; he walked quickly to that part of the grove where the guests were assembling previous to taking their departure, and soon he was exchanging repartee and compliment with his accustomed gayety.

"We positively must have another picnic, a moonlight picnic," said Mr. Paul.

"Or a serenading party," said Mr. Sutton.

"Oh! Mr. Kennett," cried Miss Grace, "such a magnificent time as we have had to-day! Tanglewood is splendid! It only needs a mistress to make it perfect."

"Ah! Mr. Kennett," said Miss Edna, "I am sorry for the *Thorne* in your side."

Harry had no idea what she meant; she was absorbed in a reverie, whereof Mrs. Marshall sounded the key-note. She was thinking of her mother, who was always for her a young girl, and she sat perfectly silent during the ride home.

And Mr. Kennett thought she was thinking of Mr. Thorne.

"Well," said Mr. Dean, who had spent an easy, comfortable day, "did you have a nice time?"

"Oh! do not ask me," said his wife, crossly. "As disagreeable as possible! It was all Ralph's fault though. I charged him to have a select company, and there were those vulgar Birches and Franklins, packed in a hack, and of course we had to be clever to them."

"That was the fault of the Innibeets," said Mr. Kennett; "I did not ask them."

"You know you asked the Poinsetts, and I particularly desired you not to do it. Only think, Harry, only think of his telling me that he thought a spirited boy would add to the fun! I hope *you* appreciated the fun?"

"You being the only victim, Miss Harry, you, I know, will forgive me," said Mr. Kennett.

"Only victim, indeed!" said Mrs. Dean. "He broke my elegant glass bowl to shivers, crushed Miss Dalrymple's beautiful basket beneath his feet, stole the strawberries, and broke the window of Mrs. Jones' carriage. He is a dreadful boy. Harry, I do not see how you can live in the same house with him."

"And poor Mr. Dunbar, Miss Harry," said Mr. Kennett. "He was under no delusion, I am sure, about the author of his troubles."

"Tim tells me," said quiet Mr. Dean, speaking slowly and deliberately, "that some one left the meadow-bars down, and the cattle have gone through and strayed, nobody knows where."

"The mischief take him," cried Mr. Kennett, springing up. "It will be a day's work to get them back, and Aunt Marshall will not have her cow to-morrow. Joe, saddle me something, I must be off."

"That is just like Ralph," said Mrs. Dean, peevishly, "he is so flighty. Harry, his weak spot is his heart, I am sùre he did not intend to slight you."

"I think his heart is strong enough," said Harry, quite careless of the impression her words might convey. She was now his fast friend, and ready to do battle for him before the world.



## CHAPTER IX.

## THE FLIGHT.



N a few days Harry returned to town, eager to visit Mrs. Marshall. As her object was to hear that good lady discourse of the youthful days of Miss Harriet Fanning, she did not wish to be attended by any of the Poinsett family; but as she did not know where Mrs. Marshall lived, she felt obliged to ask directions of them, if she would avoid the awkwardness of inquiring her way as she went.

"Uncle Poinsett," said she one day at dinner, "where does Mrs. Marshall live?"

"Down on College Row; why?"

"Because I am going to see her."

"Going to see Mrs. Marshall?" said Mr. Poinsett, with surprise. "Has she ever called on you?"

"No, sir, but she knew my mother."

"I can not possibly see what claim that fact can have upon you. There are twenty different people in the place who knew your mother."

"But she is the only one who has ever spoken of her to me, and it would be very agreeable to me to visit her."

"Harry," said Mr. Poinsett, sternly, "I must say I can not approve of your going there; I very much disapprove of it."

It was the first time Harry had ever met with the slightest opposition to her wishes from any of this family, and though she had formerly been wounded by their indifference, she was now very much inclined to be angry.

"And why may I not go?" said she, "Is she not perfectly respectable?"

"Of course, — I have nothing to say against the old lady, but she has not called on you. If she had I should not ob-

ject to you going in the carriage with Mrs. Poinsett to return the call ; but as it is, I do not at all approve."

"I can not see the necessity of being ceremonious with an old lady like Mrs. Marshall. She seems to have known my mother very well, and I very much wish to hear her talk about her."

"You know very well that she keeps a student's boarding-house?"

"What difference does that make?" said Harry, a little impatiently.

"No difference at all to me," said Mr. Poinsett, growing vexed himself; "but people will remark about your going there, as if it were on account of the boys, and as long as you are under my protection I must warn you."

"As if I did not see enough of the College-boys at home every day!"

"That will make no difference to people inclined to be censorious."

"I do not care for censorious people."

"When you are older you will see the folly of not caring for them."

Harry finished her dinner in silence and went up stairs.

"It is in the nature of those Fannings to be bold," said Miss Edna.

"I should not mind her going there so much," said Mr. Poinsett, "had it not been for the note you showed me, Edna. Henry Thorne is the name of the young man who behaved so badly last week ; he drinks too. I made some inquiries about him, and I find he boards with Mrs. Marshall."

"Yes," said Miss Edna, "and she artfully pretends she wants to hear about her mother ! I dare say she has not forgotten that Mrs. Marshall is Mr. Kennett's aunt, and that Mr. Kennett is *devoué à sa tante*."

"But, Edna, if she had wished to see Mr. Kennett she could have remained at Hazlewood," mildly said Miss Theresa.

"*Nous verrons ce que nous verrons*," said Miss Edna, who rarely lost an opportunity of quoting French. "I think she will go, in spite of brother's objections."

"Perhaps she may not," said Miss Theresa.

"I feel that she will go," said Mrs. Poinsett, despondingly. "She will be sure to go and get us into trouble. I have always felt that Mr. Poinsett would yet see trouble

about this ward-ship. If she does run away with a trifling student no one will blame the Fannings. But Mr. Poinsett *will not* use his authority. Why do you not forbid her to go? Why do you not charge her with that note?"

"Evidently, Edna, that note was placed under your door by mistake," said Miss Theresa. "I think she would very naturally resent our reading it."

"She is as careless as she is artful," said Miss Edna; "I think she needs curbing."

Meanwhile Harry pondered the affair in her own room. "Uncle Poinsett is much mistaken in me," she said. "What does he suppose I care for the company of those students in comparison with the pleasure of hearing about my mother? Mrs. Marshall is the only person here who has ever mentioned her to me. I know that my motives are pure, and as I am not actually forbidden I shall go." Accordingly she appeared at the sitting-room door equipped for her walk.

Miss Edna could not suppress a glance of triumph.

"Uncle Poinsett," said Harry, her face as serene as though it had never been clouded. "I have thought over the question seriously" — Miss Edna laughed. "I have indeed," said Harry, pleasantly; "and I am much obliged to you for the interest which prompted your warning, but I have decided to go, nevertheless I would rather not go against your approbation, yet if you do not forbid me I am going." She paused, — but none spoke and she withdrew. Pursuing her way to Mrs. Marshall's, she found herself at last in College Row, a sandy, sunny street, with a livery stable at one corner, and a blacksmith's shop opposite. The houses here were small and ugly, with little slips of ground in front, where a few common shrubs struggled for existence. Harry had never been in this part of the town before, and she had not acquired sufficiently explicit information as to Mrs. Marshall's residence to enable her to distinguish the house she was in search of. She therefore inquired of an old man whom she met near the livery stable and was by him directed to "keep on till she came to the biggest house in the street — she couldn't miss it." She kept on, accordingly, and stopped without hesitation before a large two-story house of which the front door opened directly upon the street, what yard there was, being at the side. Over the way were the College grounds, but the trees

grew so thickly that it was impossible, even from the upper windows, to obtain any view in that direction. On every other side there was nothing to be seen but ugly little houses or shops, with back-yards in which clothes were drying on the lines, or pigs rooting about. "Dear me!" thought Harry, "how is it possible for any one to be satisfied to live in such a place?"

The door was opened by the same little boy who drove the rockaway. He replied to Harry's inquiry, that Mrs. Marshall was at home, and seemed to be in a great doubt which room to invite her into. He finally opened the door on the right, and Harry gave him her card. The apartment in which she found herself had the appearance of a family sitting-room. The floor was covered with a rag-carpet, and on a table between the windows was a work-basket, a box of shells, and a few books in showy bindings of red or blue. On the mantel was a ship under a glass case, a pair of plaited candle-sticks, and high above hung a "portrait of a gentleman," which might have been executed in the infancy of the arts. Every piece of furniture in the room had evidently seen service. The chairs had patch-work cushionings, and the mohair sofa, an ancient thing, profusely ornamented with brass tacks, had been carefully mended in several places with black bombazine. But every thing was scrupulously neat; there was no lint upon the carpet, nor dust upon the furniture, and the windows were brilliantly clear.

It was a warm afternoon, and Harry had taken a seat near an open window which looked upon a back piazza. The shutters were closed, but through the blinds she could see a flower-stand covered with luxuriant geraniums. This was all she saw, but she distinctly heard Mr. Kennett's well-known voice asking, —

"What have you there, Jerry? Let me see."

"One bill one lady giv' me for Miss," was the response.

"One *bill*? You green dardy! Why Jerry, most of the gentlemen you have the honor to wait upon would consider this a talisman. This is a card, you *damnatus ignoramus*, you can ask Mr. Francis to translate that for you."

"Who is it?" asked Mrs. Marshall. "You waste so many words on Jerry that you forget to tell me, and I am too busy to read it myself."

"Why, Miss Vane."

"Well, she can just wait a bit; it will do her no harm to wait in the cool parlor until I can fix her a nice saucer of strawberries — these are the finest I ever saw. But suppose you go in, Ralph, and entertain her?"

"No, I'll be hanged if I do! I have some business to attend to this evening, and if I get into her company I shall forget all about it."

"Well, any how, I am going to treat her clever, as it is her first visit, if I do keep her waiting."

"Is it possible that this is the first time she has been to see you? She seemed to be so anxious to hear you talk about her mother, I should have supposed she would have been here before now."

"She is a dear little thing," said Mrs. Marshall; "you see I have taken a fancy to her too, Ralph."

"She is very charming," returned Mr. Kennett, "but I can not make up my mind exactly if she is as artless as she seems, or if her artlessness is the perfection of art. I know she has a great deal of sentiment, at least I think she has, and I could easily believe she wished to come here for the simple reason she stated, if it had not been for a note Miss Edna Poinsett showed me which was written to Harry by this very wild Mr. Henry Thorne you have been telling me about."

Harry felt as if a thunderbolt had fallen at her feet. "There now!" she almost exclaimed aloud, "that foolish note, I thought I had burned every one! How could I be so stupid? I see it all now, why Miss Edna never noticed the apologies I made. Dear, dear, dear! But to go and show it! And Mr. Kennett, I did think better of him, to read it. I despise him!"

These thoughts passed like a flash through her mind. She did not hear Mr. Kennett explaining to his aunt that he supposed it to be a note to Miss Edna when she showed it to him, that he did not discover it was Harry's property until he had read it, and then it was Miss Edna who opened his eyes to that fact.

Harry heard not. In a tumult of indignation, her first thought was to rush out and upbraid Mr. Kennett with his want of honor, her next thought was to run away. And she did run away! Like a bird on the wing she flew to the door, and down the street, nor paused for breath until she had turned the corner. What to do, what to say, what to

think, she scarcely knew. And thus ran the current of her unuttered thoughts :

"Uncle Poinsett was right, I will tell him so immediately. I do wish they were not so unapproachable—but I will tell him he was right. Yet I am glad I went,—that disagreeable Miss Edna! And yet she is no worse than Mr. Kennett! I liked him so much, I thought him such a gentleman. Sallie Hart was wiser than I; and I, like a little fool, took pride in the thought that I could discover excellences she could not see. A worldly unscrupulous person! To call himself a gentleman? I am taking nice lessons in the ways of the world. Grace Innabee pretends to be such a friend, and tells any one that the Mr. Poinsetts do not like me. Sallie Hart, whom I like for the sake of old times is always laughing at me; and Mr. Kennett,—I shall certainly know how to treat him when I next meet him. And all this comes of that silly flirtation Julia Cressing drew me into. If I really cared for Henry Thorne I would not mind it so much,—I would then have something to support me in this mortification. Oh! dear, I do wish Aunt Eleanor were at home! Where will all this end, I wonder?"

At last she reached Mr. Poinsett's door. They were still discussing the unfortunate note when Harry entered.

"Uncle Poinsett! said she, abruptly, "you were right, and I was wrong: I should not have gone! I find that people do impute wrong motives for the most natural conduct."

"Do you mean to say that you had no particular object in view in calling on Mrs. Marshall?" said Mr. Poinsett.

"No, sir; I did have a particular object in view, and I told you so; I wished to hear Mrs. Marshall talk about my mother, but I am well aware what cause you have to think otherwise."

"Mr. Kennett has told"—began Miss Edna.

"No," interrupted Harry, impatiently, "Mr. Kennett has told me nothing, but I know."

"And I know, Harry," interposed Mr. Poinsett, "that you have been guilty of very silly, underhanded behavior. I feel it my duty to warn you that your wealth is likely to render you a prey to some fortune-hunter. You can't not be too careful how you permit such notes as this."

Harry sprang forward, seized the note, and tore it to pieces.

"I did not see," said she, trembling with anger, "I did not see any necessity to confide the contents of my notes to any one here. As to concealment I never attempted it, and I never do underhanded things. I would not read a note not intended for me."

"Ungrateful girl!" said Miss Edna.

"I thought it my duty, Harry," said Mr. Poinsett, sternly.

"Oh, Uncle Poinsett!" said she, "I have not been fairly used. I am not a child, I am not ungovernable. I do not blame you for reading the note — so much; you are my guardian and had a kind of right. But was it just, was it honorable to show my note to any one else?"

"Well, Miss Vane," said Miss Edna, "it must be a serious affair, you take it so much to heart."

"A silly little note?" said Harry. "Why should I trouble any one with its contents?" And she went up stairs thinking how easy it would be to "tell Aunt Eleanor all about it."

"Well!" said Mrs. Poinsett, "I do hope when this fine young wild man comes to the door it will be barred against him."

But Mr. Thorne never came to the Poinsetts' door.

Good Mrs. Marshall was astonished beyond measure, when on opening the parlor door on the left, no Miss Vane was to be seen.

"Why, bless my life!" she exclaimed. "I must see Ralph about that!" And she rushed back to the piazza, but no 'Ralph' was there; he had gone out by the back-gate. Then she called up Jerry. "Which room did you ask Miss Vane into?"

"That ar one," replied the sturdy little liar, pointing to the left-hand door.

"Jerry, Jerry," said Mrs. Marshall, "them boys have been a tampering with you. I'll bet my old shoe this is one of that Tom Hearn's pranks, a young rascal!"

Jerry grinned from ear to ear, thus thoroughly confirming his mistress in her suspicions of Tom Hearn.

"Well, well!" she said, "it is well to be reminded of her, I shan't wait for her; as soon as I get over my stress of work I'll call on her myself."

But Mrs. Marshall did not get over her 'stress of work' for some days, and when she did call Harry was not at

home. The young lady had passed several days in a very misanthropic mood. At the end of the fourth day, however, she rallied, and went again into the hateful, heartless world, and found it delightful. She took a ride with Mr. Sutton, in the course of which she had the satisfaction of passing Mr. Kennett with a very haughty bow, a proceeding which caused him to turn round and look after her as she cantered past, and then to burst into a hearty laugh.

"I do verily believe," said he, "that she is a genuine little coquette! Well if she is I will give her a fair chance to amuse herself with me." And in pursuance of this resolve he called at the Poinsetts' soon after, but Miss Vane whom he heard singing, declined to see him on the plea of a headache, though it did not prevent her going out to tea, and enjoying herself exceedingly. She had fairly recovered from her misanthropy when a letter from Mrs. Dean, written and mailed in the city, brought on another fit of disgust at the world. Mrs. Dean had gone thither with Sallie Hart to purchase finery for the summer. Now there had never been any positive promise on her part to take Harry with her, but Harry had considered it an understood thing, and she was very indignant when she received this letter. Sometimes she blamed Sallie Hart, sometimes she was sure that it was owing to Mr. Kennett that she was left behind, sometimes she feared that Mr. Poinsett had interfered to prevent her going, and she became outrageous. This disappointment, however, was much alleviated by an intimacy that had lately sprung up between herself and Miss Theresa. Harry had always felt a peculiar interest in this gentle lady, though until very lately she had seen less of her than of any other member of the family. But this very reserve of manner threw around her a charm and a mystery which appealed powerfully to the romance and enthusiasm of Harry's nature. Miss Theresa was as tender as she was timid. She had taken an interest in Harry from the first, but was too shy to manifest it in any particular way. Since the day Harry paid the visit to Mrs. Marshall she had felt it a duty to befriend her, and to use what influence she could acquire for her good. And so it came to pass that Harry thought she did not give Miss Theresa her unreserved confidence, yet talked very freely to her. She told her the particulars of her visit, by which her opinion of Mr. Kennett was entirely changed, while gentle Miss



Theresa warned her to be charitable, as there might be extenuating circumstances. Then Harry spoke of her disappointment about going to the city.

"I was vexed at first," said she, "but I believe I don't care, I might have had to encounter that abominable Mr. Kennett."

But Mrs. Dean's omission to take Harry with her, was owing to the fact, that Mr. Kennett had refused to be of the party, and that Mr. Cressing's newhew was, according to Sallie Hart, in the city, so that Harry would be sure to be thrown with him which would not be agreeable to Mr. and Mrs. Fanning. Miss Hart had urged this at a time when she thought Mr. Kennett would go with them, and when he declined she could not counteract the effect it had produced upon Mrs. Dean. A second letter soon arrived from the lady, ignoring her neglect altogether, and making unlimited offers of her service. She sent Harry numerous fashion-plates, and entreated earnestly for orders.

"I think," said Harry to Miss Theresa, "I shall let her get me a few things, though Aunt Eleanor writes me she has bought me some beautiful dresses in New Orleans. Still I will not hurt Mrs. Dean's feelings' if she did hurt mine."

Notwithstanding the dresses which were expected from New Orleans, Harry gave Mrs. Dean such numerous orders that when a chance traveller from the city brought the various boxes and packages containing her summer wardrobe, Mrs. Poinsett was alarmed at her extravagance, and expressed her disapprobation with freedom.

Harry heard her patiently as she displayed her finery, and propitiated her by the bestowal of some fancy articles for Blanche. Indeed, she forgot no one in the distribution of presents, giving with a lavish hand, like all very young people with plenty of money at command. Her gifts were too expensive to be in good taste, but this proceeded not so much from ostentation, as from the dread of appearing mean. Every morning, while the children were at school and Mrs. Poinsett busy down stairs, Harry amused herself with trying on her new dresses and running to Miss Theresa's room to be admired.

"Oh! Miss Theresa," said she, on one of these occasions, "please tell me if I am really so like my mother? Do tell me of her, for certainly you must have known her?"

"I knew her very slightly, Harry. We did not live here at that time, but I saw her several times when I was here on a visit."

"Do I resemble her so much?"

"Yes, I think you do, and, from all I have heard of your mother, you resemble her as much in character as in person."

"Oh!" said Harry, with a little impatient gesture of her hand, "please do not say that! Mrs. Marshall says every one loved my mother, so she must have been more prudent, more mild and gentle than I."

"Do you not think yourself lovable?" said Miss Theresa, with a smile.

"Well," said Harry, with amusing frankness, "I believe I do think myself what is called *taking*, but that is not being lovable; I am too quick tempered."

"But you have a warm heart, Harry, and it is in your power to make yourself very much beloved."

Harry blushed with pleasure, and said, after a little pause, "It would be very pleasant to be loved by every body, but Miss Theresa, — I am afraid you will think me silly, — but I have always had a pet wish to be loved beyond all else by somebody. I should not care if he were ugly or handsome, or rich or poor, so he were not mean, if only he loved me best of any."

"It is a very natural, wish my dear," said Miss Theresa, with a little laugh. "But I would advise you not to express it too freely before the world."

"You think it a very wicked, bad world, then, Miss Theresa?"

"No, my dear, I do not think so; it is a very good world, but prudence is necessary. —"

"Ah, hush!" said Harry. "Prudence! Now I know you are thinking of Mr. Thorne."

"No; but it is very well if you can apply what I have said."

"But really he is nothing to me. I know nothing of him, except that he is Judge Cressing's nephew."

"Why Harry? And yet you permitted him to write to you?"

"Only three or four little notes that Julia Cressing brought me; there is nothing so shocking in that. A good many of us girls had gentlemen to write us little notes."

It never did any harm unless Mme. Camballat found it out."

"But do you not think it was wrong to do what you knew she would forbid?"

"Yes," said Harry frankly. "But then I saw the others getting notes, and I did not like to be behind the rest. And then you know, Miss Theresa, girls generally like to elude a strict teacher. Now Mrs. Porter did not say "*Mon dieu!*" and "*Est il possible!*" and "*La jeune trompeuse!*" like Madame; she was mild and gentle like you. And then Madame was so deceitful, there was no truth about her."

"When Mrs. Fanning returns, Harry, I hope you will confide in her unreservedly?"

"Dear Aunt Eleanor? Oh, yes indeed! She would only laugh." Hitherto Mrs. Fanning had "only laughed," but hitherto Harry had been "only a child." "I shall have such a grand time next winter," continued Harry.

"Your aunt," said Miss Theresa, anxious to induce Harry to be serious, "will be an excellent guide."

"Now Miss Theresa I know you want to lecture me; what is it?"

"Harry, I heard you flattering Mr. Dunbar yesterday evening."

"Well, but what can one do? One must say something pleasant," said Harry, with a laugh and a blush.

"It is rather a serious thing, though, to be too pleasant to one who can not be so pleasant to us."

"Do you think it a sin to flirt?" said Harry.

"Yes, Harry; it is wrong."

"Not to flirt with such a thing as Mr. Sutton, for example? I think it would be a benefit to humanity to take down his conceit."

"Harry, I hope you will not try it," said Miss Theresa, gravely.

"Oh! now," cried Harry, "you are running counter to all my strongest propensities, and I really can not stay to hear!"

## CHAPTER X.

## THE JUNIORS' PARTY.



HARRY had expected to remain in Netherford until after the Commencement Exercises of Kenby College, which were to take place the last of June; but a letter from Mrs. Dean informed her that she wished to leave for Myrtle Springs the first of June, and begged that Harry would hold herself in readiness.

There was the Senior Speaking, however, which occupied a week, though Harry did not attend until the third or fourth day. Her ideas concerning colleges were rather magnificent; among her father's collection of drawings were a number of engravings of Cambridge and Oxford, and various European universities, and from these she had derived some exalted notions about the architectural beauties of seats of learning. The first view of Kenby College disappointed her bitterly, but as she had hitherto seen only the exterior, her imagination continued to work wonders with the interior. She loved to fancy that those plain, unostentatious walls enclosed a shrine where beautiful pillars supported an arched roof intricate with delicate carving, and shutting her eyes to the square white windows, she pictured lofty arches where the various-colored light streamed, through painted glass. She forgot how the dull, dark walls of St. Botolf's had dashed to the ground a similar gorgeous vision. She experienced a sensation of keen disappointment upon first entering the college chapel, where the speeches were delivered, from which she did not entirely recover during the morning.

There were six orations with music intervening, supplied by the College Band. On Commencement Day Mr. Sutton generally took charge of the music, and never failed to cover himself with glory; but on the less important occa-

sion of Senior Speaking, he left the divine art in the hands of the college youths. So the audience were regaled with "Love Not Quickstep," "Jenny Lind Polka," "Life on the Ocean Wave," "Bonaparte Crossing the Rhine," &c.

The speakers were attired in black silk gowns, and were listened to with polite attention, though occasionally the venerable President was compelled to rebuke some young gentlemen in the galleries whose behavior Harry thought *out-Jacked Jack*.

Harry was deeply interested; she listened, and smiled, and approved, and was, on the whole, quite well pleased, except when one unfortunate faltered in his speech, and finally came to a dead halt, which made her miserable.

The exercises closed as they had begun, with prayer, and Harry was immediately surrounded by a host of admirers, soliciting the honor of attending her to the Juniors' Party, an annual entertainment which was to take place that evening at Mrs. Marshall's. Harry had promised to go with Richard, and Blanche accepted the escort of a Mr. Martin, an excessively bashful youth.

The preparations for this party occupied Blanche the remainder of the day. After tea she made her appearance in the same pink barège she had worn at the Quodlibet, while Harry came down in a tarleton like a snow-flake. There stood their two beaux in elaborate attire, the perfection of college dandyism.

"Oh, Richard!" cried Harry, gleefully, "do tell me I look beautifully, because I want to express my admiration of you, and I would not appear to be begging compliments."

Mr. Poinsett laughed. He had entirely forgotten his displeasure about Mr. Thorne. "Harry, I wish you could infuse some of your ease into these children of mine; they cannot forget themselves."

"Oh! that will disappear when once they begin to dance; you cannot think how that civilizes people."

Quite a blaze of light streamed from the hall as Mrs. Marshall's door was opened to the party-goers. They mounted the stairs together, the ladies' arms fast linked within their cavaliers', who attended them with that determined "do-or-die" for-the-fair manner, highly characteristic of college gallantry. All honor to the college youths! With them alone is found any remnant of that spirit which

sent the knights-errant of old to the relief of distressed damsels. The fair sex never had warmer, more sincere, more devoted admirers than are found among these uncontaminated youths, who, fresh from the endearing influences of home, still believe that woman is an angel; albeit one heretic of the tribe did, that very morning, deliver an oration with the title, "Woman not an Angel."

Harry appreciated their devotion, sympathized with their unworldly aspirations after fame and their worship of honor, and consequently was adored by them all. To her there was nothing ridiculous in their elaborateness of manner, nor ought there to be to any one. It is but one of the many forms in which the redundancy of youth exhibits itself—that redundancy which excuses many worse things than bows and flourishes which would not disgrace a dancing-master. There is heart and feeling in such manners, and though a mite of vanity mingle therewith, it is the vanity which desires your approbation, not the vanity which exalts itself above you.

When Harry and Blanche entered the dressing-room they found it full of young ladies. There was Miss Jones, the President's daughter, Miss Hudson, whose father was Professor of Mathematics, and many others. Grace Innibee was there, talking volubly, of course.

"La, Harry," said she, "and whom did you come with? So, Blanche, I believe this is your first party, and don't you feel queer? I hope you may enjoy yourself. Emily did not come," continued she to Harry. "She says she cares nothing about these juvenile entertainments; but the truth is, Em is too clever with her pencil; she has made herself dreaded by the boys on account of her propensity for drawing caricatures. After all, my art is the most desirable; it offends no one. Come girls, we may as well go down."

Harry, on entering the long dining-room where they were to dance, instantly recognized Tim and Lewis, who furnished the music for the picnic, and she was sure Mr. Kennett had lent his assistance to the Juniors' Party, and she felt disturbed at the thought of meeting him. Indeed, the idea had occurred to her before she left home, but having heard that none might attend this party but the Juniors, her fears were relieved. She forgot them, indeed, very soon, for the dancing commenced immediately, and was

kept up with unflagging spirit, the dancers not considering it worth while even to sit down between the sets. Good Mrs. Marshall surveyed the scene with supreme delight, and and once condescended to join a cotillon; indeed, she laughingly boasted that she might have as many "pardoners" as she pleased, and no doubt she might.

Every one danced except a gentleman who sat in a corner of the room all the evening with his hand on a crutch, in whom Harry recognized the original of the portrait over the mantel-piece in the sitting-room. Once while they were waiting for a set to form Mrs. Marshall came up to Harry leaning on Mr. Kennett's arm. Harry had never seen either of them, except at a distance, since the day she so unceremoniously ran away, and as she was ignorant of the fact that Mrs. Marshall supposed her visit to be a trick of some of the boys, the sight of them both together threw her into considerable trepidation.

"I hope you are enjoying yourself," said Mr. Kennett. "Do you find this as delightful as a picnic?"

"Very pleasant indeed," said Harry, stiffly.

"I am glad you are enjoying it, my dear," said Mrs. Marshall; "you know I love to see young people enjoy themselves."

"Yes," said Mr. Kennett, "and some young people, knowing how lenient you are, feel themselves at liberty to play off all manner of pranks upon you."

Harry felt very guilty, and was just going to betray herself, when Mrs. Marshall said, with a good-humored laugh,

"Just to think of one of those boys, taking on your name, my dear, and sending me a card the other day with 'Miss Vane' on it. If I had gone into the parlor directly I should perhaps have caught him in his mischief, but I stopped to get you a nice saucer of strawberries, and by the time I got to the parlor the scamp was gone."

"Very impertinent, indeed!" said Harry, while she thought, "oh, how lucky it was not an engraved card."

Mr. Kennett was completely mystified by her cool reply, and good Mrs. Marshall hastened to say,

"Oh! no my dear; he did not mean any disrespect, I am sure." And then she went her way, but Mr. Kennett still remained, Harry thought, uncomfortably near. Just then a young man stepped up to one of the negroes and, taking his fiddle from him, tuned it, and began to play. He had a

brigandish sort of countenance, just one of those faces that very young and romantic ladies are enraptured with. It was Mr. Thorne; Harry recognized him instantly, and almost unconsciously glanced at Mr. Kennett. He was looking steadily but calmly at her. She felt her face burn, with pure indignation, she was sure. "The unblushing creature! how can he dare to look at me without wincing? I despise him!"

Soon after this the refreshments were produced, and Harry, with a little knot of attendants, foremost among whom was Mr. Thorne, retired to one of the long benches placed against the wall. As the great trays of cakes, syllabubs, sandwiches, and chicken-salad were deposited upon a side-table, her obsequious vassals rushed off to procure her the daintiest morsels.

"Why, Mr. Francis!" cried she, to a tall young man who offered a very small quantity of chicken-salad upon a little gilt-edged saucer; "why, Mr. Francis! what an ethereal idea you must have of a lady's appetite! Go straight back and get me some more."

"Here is a better supply, Miss Harry," cried one, "take mine."

"No, no, Miss Harry, here is mine; this, I assure you, is better," exclaimed another, offering a plate which had been filled from the very same dish.

Mr. Kennett, standing at a little distance, was much amused with this little empress holding her court.

"We poor fellows might as well make hay while the sun shines," said one of her admirers; "yonder is Mr. Kennett, now, watching his chance."

"Yes; he is my most dreaded rival," said another.

"Now hush," said Harry; "none of you must fear him; for I particularly detest him. I think he is destitute of all sense of honor and propriety."

This impolite speech caught Mr. Kennett's ear; in an instant he had brought a chair and placed it behind her.

"What is that, Miss Harry?" said he, pretending to have misunderstood her. "Detest Mr. Francis? He is one of the most amiable young men in college; the warmth of his feelings may have betrayed him into some little vehemence of manner, but in Kenby College, the standard of honor and propriety is so high that I cannot believe him destitute of either."



"No," said Harry, exasperated, "it was of yourself I spoke."

"Of me? Unfortunate that I am."

Mr. Thorne gave him a look which, in the days when men wore swords would have inevitably been accompanied by a seizure of that weapon. But the look did not frighten Mr. Kennett, neither did the words which accompanied it.

"I think, sir, your sense of honor and propriety must be considerably below the standard you ascribe to Kenby College, since you persist in thrusting your society upon a young lady who has distinctly avowed her aversion to it."

"Excuse me!" Mr. Kennett answered gayly; "I have long since discovered that ladies, like dreams, are to be interpreted by contraries, and having three weeks ago languished in Miss Vane's smiles, I may now bask in her frowns."

Mr. Thorne stalked away. Harry was exceedingly angry.

"Now Miss Harry," cried Mr. Kennett, "since the jealous Mr. Thorne has taken himself out of the way, give us the benefit of your ideas on honor and propriety; here is a pencil, and here is a letter, luckily; I should have mailed it this afternoon, but I can put it into another envelope."

"No!" said Harry indignantly, "the very fact that you treat honor and propriety as a subject for jest shows that you have no respect for either."

"What's all this?" cried Grace Innibee, rushing up and peeping over Mr. Kennett's shoulder. "Letters! love-letters?"

"Birds of a feather!" thought Harry; "I am not surprised that he is not shocked at her."

"Fletcher! Mr. Owen Fletcher!" cried Miss Grace, reading the direction. "Why man, are you in correspondence with that old ghost?"

Harry immediately became intensely interested.

"Not exactly," said Mr. Kennett, "but with some of his descendants, or rather some of his kindred."

"And is it true that you are going to buy Four-Oaks?"

"If I can."

"Dear! I hope you will; such a lovely situation for a handsome building of the Corinthian order."

"It is a beautiful place," said Mr. Kennett.

"And when you do build there, Mr. Kennett," said Miss Grace, "do not forget a fine hall for private concerts!"

"And a picture gallery," added Mr. Kennett, "and" — Here they were all electrified by Harry exclaiming, "You Goth! to tear down that old house to put one of your new-fangled things in its place."

"But Miss Harry," said Mr. Kennett, with mock distress, "it is full of ghosts!"

"So much the better," said Harry; "I hope you will never be able to buy it." And she took the arm of a student and walked away.

"What a pity she is so spoiled," said Miss Grace.

"Spoiled! I do not think her the least spoiled, she is so perfectly natural; though I am somewhat out of favor with her just now."

"Oh! that is what one must expect with a flirt. Sallie Hart says she is a terrible little flirt."

"Perhaps so," said Mr. Kennett, "but she is a very delightful one."

A little later, when the feet of the dancers were beginning to grow weary, Mr. Kennett beheld Harry and Mr. Thorne in very earnest conversation in a distant corner. "Ah!" thought he, "I wish I were that child's brother, or cousin, or uncle, that I might warn her against that young Thorne, for in spite of Aunt Marshall's excuses, I cannot help thinking he is a very bad young man. I do not like his face. There now!" as he saw a little white hand extended to meet Mr. Thorne's, "I suppose they have had a quarrel and are making it up; I do not much regret that I am out of favor with her, for I suspect that when she does forgive she forgives most generously."

In spite of the unpleasant encounter with Mr. Kennett, Harry had enjoyed the party exceedingly. She had been the belle of the evening, and her disgust of the world was not so incurable that she could not enjoy such a distinction. It was even an honor, a feather in her cap, to have had an opportunity to show how indifferent she was to the man the other girls admired so much. So she decided that even Mr. Kennett's presence was not a thorn. But — "Let no man be pronounced happy before his death," said the wise Solon; and so, for the benefit of young ladies, the maxim may be parodied, "Let no party be pronounced a pleasure without alloy until the next morning."

As they were going home that night Harry listened to poor Richard's stammering tale of love with feelings any-

thing but triumphant; she liked Richard too well to take any satisfaction in this conquest. But in vain she represented that she was older than he, Richard swore that Love was immortal and knew not age, and his extravagant despair sent Harry to bed with an aching heart, and the pleasures of the evening were utterly forgotten. Nor was this all; some of Richard's vehement protestations were overheard by Blanche, who reported them to Miss Edna on the morrow.

Immediately the whole Poinsett family was in an uproar. Harry was regarded as a heartless, designing young lady, and Richard could not shield her from the storm. Even gentle Miss Theresa thought her to blame, and the gay little speech with which she had accosted Richard before they started for the party was now interpreted to her disadvantage. Her position in the Poinsett family was now both awkward and painful. There was nowhere that she could go without giving occasion for gossip, for Mrs. Dean had not yet returned. A miserably uncomfortably week passed, and at the end of that time there came a little note from Hazlewood saying, that Mrs. Dean had come home, and begging Harry to be ready when she called for her the next morning to take the early train for the Springs.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### MYRTLE SPRINGS.



R. DUNBAR had lately been somewhat remiss in his attentions to Harry, but, hearing that she expected to leave the next day, he hurried to Mr. Poinsetts that he might bid her good-by. It was his intention also, to visit Myrtle Springs during the summer, and he was anxious to inform her of that intention.

It was a warm afternoon, and Harry was in the front-yard gathering a bouquet from a flower-bed which she had cultivated for her pleasure all the spring. Her reflections

were not the most agreeable in the world, to judge by the expression of her countenance, but the clouded visage brightened somewhat when she espied Mr. Dunbar riding up upon an old white horse which had carried him many a day.

"Oh! how do you do?" cried she. "I am glad to see you, for I am going away to-morrow."

"Yes, so they tell me," said he, as he awkwardly dismounted.

"I will not invite you into the house," said Harry, leading the way to the porch; "it is so much pleasanter in the open air."

"Well!" said he, seating himself on the wooden settee, "I don't know as I care particularly so long as I am in your company."

"That is what I call a pretty speech!" said Harry. "Mr. Dunbar, I wish you would impart the art of saying pretty things to the Netherford gentlemen."

"Can't you impart that art yourself, Miss Harry?" said Mr. Dunbar, grinning with delight.

"Ah, no indeed!" said Harry, pretending to sigh.

"How dull Netherford will be without you, Miss Harry."

"Do you really think so?"

"Certainly; you can't realize it because you are going to have a gay time of it this summer. You'll soon forget your Netherford friends?"

"I never forget my friends," said Harry, pulling her bouquet to pieces and beginning to re-arrange it.

"Won't you forget me?" said Mr. Dunbar, with a foolish palpitation about his heart.

"Forget you? Indeed I shall not forget you, Mr. Dunbar."

Mr. Dunbar's face was overspread with a sudden flush. He was too old a man to be imposed upon by such a mere girl, and yet he was imposed upon; though happily for him his vanity was tickled more than his heart was touched. He drew a little nearer to Harry, and asked, "Can't you give me those flowers as a keepsake?"

"No," said Harry, "I want them for somebody else."

"Who?" said he, almost fiercely.

"For a friend," said Harry, with a little, sly smile.

"I envy him," said Mr. Dunbar, making an effort to overcome his discomfiture.

"It is a lady," said Harry, demurely.

"Oh! that alters the question; then I sha'n't insist upon having them; I'll only beg for a blossom or two to put in my prayer-book."

"You have not a prayer-book," said Harry, "you are a heretic."

"Ah! Miss Harry; how uncharitable! I'll buy me a prayer-book, and you shall convert me, if you will only give me a flower."

"Well, there?" said Harry, tossing him a sprig of mignonette.

"But what is the emblem of this weedy-looking thing?"

"Weedy, indeed! I've a great mind to take it back. It is a dear little flower, and its emblem is so appropriate."

"Good evening, Mr. Dunbar. Are you learning the language of flowers?" said Blanche, stepping on the porch.

"Good evening, Miss Blanche!" said Mr. Dunbar, dropping his sprig of mignonette, as he rose.

"Are you learning the language of flowers?" repeated Blanche.

Mr. Dunbar, anxiously looking for his flower, did not heed.

"Yes," said Harry, "Mr. Dunbar has just taken his first lesson."

"It is a silly pastime," coldly said Miss Theresa, who now came on the porch.

Harry started slightly; she had not expected to hear such a sentiment from Miss Theresa. Rising in some confusion, she said, as she offered her flowers,

"Miss Theresa, here is a bouquet I have gathered for you."

To her infinite astonishment, Miss Theresa, instead of manifesting pleasure at this little attention, put out her hand and motioned the flowers away, saying,

"Thank you, Harry, not now." And turning to Mr. Dunbar, she made some trivial remark about the weather.

Harry was hurt, and so surprised that she stood quite still a moment gazing at Miss Theresa; then she threw her flowers on the bench and went in. She could not absent herself from the tea-table, but she made no effort to talk, and she excused herself as early as she could with propriety, not to finish packing, as she alleged, but to indulge undisturbed, in bitter reflections upon the refusal of her flowers. This

had been the most intolerable of all the disagreeable experiences she had encountered in her intercourse with the Poinsett family.

From the parlor there floated the sound of music ; Blanche was singing the " Young May Moon," and Mr. Dunbar was assisting. Harry heard in bitterness of heart ; she was in no mood to laugh at the caricature of music enacted down stairs. " I suppose," she said to herself, " it is all because of Richard. As if I could help it. The very next time any one comes sighing and dying about me, I will — I will run away ! That seems to succeed better with me than any other plan." And, bewailing her hard fate, Harry fell asleep.

Early the next morning Mrs. Dean's carriage stopped at the gate for Miss Vane. Mrs. Dean, though there was no necessity for haste, was in a fever of impatience. She sent Mr. Dean in for Harry, bidding him urge her to make all possible speed, as she could not bear to be kept waiting. The message was delivered, and immediately there was a rushing up and down stairs after Harry's baggage. Her trunks were carried out and placed in the wagon with Mrs. Dean's and Miss Hart's. Harry thought that every one moved about with extraordinary alacrity, and she came down stairs all gloved and bonneted, in a very stony frame of mind.

The family were all assembled to bid her good-by except Richard, whose absence, under the circumstances, she could not regret. Those hateful kisses of ceremony were gone through with, Mr. Poinsett requesting to hear from her when she should feel inclined to write, and then she stooped down to bid Davy good-by.

" Good-by, Davy," said she, " I am going ; do not forget me."

Davy threw his arms around her, and screamed and cried, and said she should not go. Harry cried too, and, while Mrs. Dean sat fuming with impatience, Davy was torn away, and she hurried to the carriage, where sat Mrs. Dean and Miss Hart, arrayed in the latest style of travelling fabrics.

" Do jump in, quick, my dear," said Mrs. Dean ; " I am afraid we shall be too late."

" Plenty of time," said Mr. Dean, taking out his watch.

" No, Mr. Dean," said his wife, " I know better ; there is not plenty of time. Drive up, Joe."

At the depôt they found Mr. Sutton, enveloped in a vast linen overcoat. "Well, ladies, good morning," said he. "We are likely to have a very dusty time, I fear."

"Why do not the cars come?" said Mrs. Dean, impatiently.

"Not yet time, ma'am," said Mr. Sutton.

"But it ought to be time; we left home three hours ago."

"Well," said Mr. Sutton, gallantly, "put me with the hours, and a railway depôt is a paradise."

However much the young ladies may have been flattered by this speech, Mrs. Dean was in no humor to appreciate it. She was vexed because "Ralph" had refused to go with her party to Myrtle Springs, and had declared his intention of visiting the mountains of Virginia. Being in an ill-humor, she made Harry, who sat with her, extremely weary by the time the first stage of the journey was accomplished. Mr. Sutton devoted himself to Miss Hart, so that when they came to change cars, as Mr. Dean had to attend to the baggage, Harry had to undertake to secure seats for herself and Mrs. Dean, for Mr. Sutton and Miss Hart had left them behind. Mrs. Dean objected very much to being separated from her party, so after several changes they were finally seated together. Mr. Dean, having seen them settled to their satisfaction, went to a distant corner, where he might read his newspaper to his satisfaction.

They had been seated but a few moments when Harry began bustling about very excitedly, exclaiming all the while, in an undertone, "Dear me, where can it be?" as she turned around, felt in her pockets, examined her basket, looked under the seat, and shook her dress.

"What is the matter?" asked her companions. "Have you lost anything?"

"Nothing of any consequence," said she, seeking diligently.

"Oh do, Harry, sit still!" exclaimed Mrs. Dean. "You make me so nervous I do not know what to do."

"But I must find it," said Harry. Mrs. Dean sank back with a deep sigh.

"Harry, you must have St. Vitus' dance," said Miss Hart.

Still Harry searched desperately.

"What is it, Miss Harry?" said Mr. Sutton. "Let me assist you?"

"Oh, please do not keep such a fuss," said Harry, nervously. "I would rather find it myself."

Miss Hart and Mr. Sutton laughed.

"Upon my word!" said the latter, "my curiosity never was so excited. What can it be? A letter? a ring? Or your heart, perhaps, or *his* daguerreotype?"

"Oh, do not be so silly!" cried Harry. "You attract every one's attention."

She had herself attracted the attention of some gentlemen seated near, and they rose to aid in the search. "What have you lost, miss?"

"I do not know," said Harry. "It is no matter. It is gone. Pray do not trouble; thank you, sir."

Miss Hart and Mr. Sutton laughed immoderately.

"Perhaps you left it in the other train, Miss Harry!" And looking out of the window just as the down train was about to start, Mr. Sutton recognized a young friend, and called out to him, "I say, Jarvis! if you find anything and cannot tell what it is, let me know, will you? There is a young lady here has lost such a thing."

There was a general laugh.

"You excessively disagreeable person!" said Harry, half laughing, half crying.

Mr. Sutton's raillery and Mrs. Dean's fretfulness completely exhausted poor Harry's spirits by the time they reached the station, whence they rode in a hack, two miles to the Springs. But every trace of languor and fatigue vanished, when her Uncle John Fanning came to assist her to alight.

"Oh! what an unexpected joy!" cried Harry. "Where is Aunt Eleanor?"

"Aunt Eleanor" was not far off. She came down the steps quickly, a handsome, large, but well-proportioned and elegantly dressed lady, and hurried Harry to her cabin, where they talked incessantly all the evening.

Myrtle Springs consisted of one long street of single and double log cabins with little porches in front, all neatly white-washed. At one end stood the hotel, which contained the dining-room and parlor; at the other were the famous Sulphur and Chalybeate Springs. There was also a ball-room, a billiard-saloon, and a ten-pin alley; and last, but not least, "a gentlemanly and obliging proprietor." In short, everything was to be found there which people



usually find when they leave their quiet, comfortable homes for the crowds, the gayety, and the discomfort of a watering-place.

When Harry arrived there were very few guests, but their number rapidly increased. Among the arrivals from Netherford were the Innibee family, and Mr. Brittain and his mother. Mrs. Brittain sat in her porch with her book or knitting, and associated chiefly with some ancient dames who had no incumbrances in the shape of pretty young daughters or nieces. Mr. Brittain played chess and read or walked. Mr. Paul made an herbarium, Miss Susan collected recipes and cut patterns, Miss Emily made sketches, and Miss Grace set her brother's verses to music and sang them. Mrs. Dean petted herself, Mrs. Fanning expatiated upon Cuba to an admiring audience; every one had some special occupation except Harry. As soon as the game of ten-pins was over every morning, the Misses Innibee, who knew as great a variety of stitches as Taylor, the water-poet enumerates, held a school of industry which was largely attended. Harry alone refused to use a needle, except to string seeds, or berries, or flowers for necklaces, or head-dresses. She had soon wearied of the systematic routine of pleasure; the walk to the Springs before breakfast, ten-pins afterwards, cards or fancy work until dinner, then a nap, then another walk, and after tea, dancing until bedtime. Of dancing indeed, she did not easily tire, though she often left the ball-room at the request of some music-loving people, who wished to hear her sing. Harry's songs were not confined to fashionable opera airs; she knew an infinity of ballads, both old and new; and these, whether gay or sad, she rendered with such artlessness and spirit that she held her hearers spellbound. Night after night she sang to an admiring little circle without ever perceiving that she had one enraptured auditor always sitting on the gallery by the window.

Mr. Brittain noticed Harry in his quiet way, a great deal more than any one suspected, until he came to regard her as an animated vision; so different in all she did from other young ladies whom he had known, that he longed to discover if she were as different in her thoughts and feelings. But he was very slow about taking steps toward this discovery. He was no ladies' man; he had no little graceful nothings at his tongue's end, wherewith to entertain a lady.

The little he had heard of Harry's conversation, however, did not incline him to think little nothings essential to her entertainment, and every day he determined to make some advances; but night found him no farther than the window through which her ravishing voice floated to his delighted ears. He played chess most perseveringly with Mr. Fanning, who was a miserable blunderer, in the hope that Harry would come and look over; but he was doomed to eternal disappointment, for Harry hated chess.

But however much Miss Harry Vane might charm others, her proceedings did not obtain her aunt's entire approbation. Mrs. Fanning had certain fixed principles concerning a young lady's conduct in society, from which it was, in her sight, a crime to deviate. During the two or three summers which Harry had passed with her at Bathen it was of no consequence, provided she wore a veil, that she spent all her mornings building sand forts on the beach, or her evenings launching a fairy boat upon the briny deep, she was then a mere unfledged school girl. But now the case was altered, and Mrs. Fanning was both amazed and annoyed to discover that the only reason why Harry did not continue to build sand forts and launch miniature boats was because there was neither beach nor brine at Myrtle Springs. She bore with her niece's eccentricities, as she called Harry's novel modes of amusing herself, until she found her one day surrounded by children, sticking straws into potatoes to represent pigs. She had quite a herd of these artificial swine stretched out upon the bottom step of the piazza, and was manufacturing others with great rapidity, to the delight of the children, and the serious displeasure of her aunt, who was passing by at that time with some of her fashionable acquaintances. Mrs. Fanning had too much self-control to exhibit her displeasure in public, but she took the first private opportunity to read Miss Harry a lecture.

"Harry, I was perfectly shocked at you, this morning. Now, you need not begin kissing me; your own sense of the fitness of things ought to teach you that it is time to put away childish amusements. There are three things which never fail to mar the prospects of a young lady in society, *affectation*, *eccentricity*, and *flirting*. I am seriously afraid that you are inclined to all three."

"Why, auntie?"

"I am in earnest. There was Mr. Brittain this morning,

evidently wishing to enter into conversation with you, and no hint could make you stay. Even when he offered to teach you chess, you flatly said you could not bear to sit still long enough, and then you must go to making a monkey show for babies ! ”

“ But why should I *affect* to like chess when I hate it ? Besides, if I had stayed I might have taken to flirting with Mr. Brittain. ”

“ Nonsense ! There is no necessity whatever for flirting with Mr. Brittain. ”

“ Would you let me marry him ? ” said Harry, with mock gravity.

“ Harry, you are incorrigible ! ” said Mrs. Fanning, laughing. “ What an absurd idea ! Heaven forbid that you should marry the man ! I have no wish to see you settled down to such a humdrum life. But Mr Brittain is a remarkably intelligent person, he is well-read and he has travelled. I wish you to cultivate his acquaintance because his conversation would be very improving to you ; it is time you were taking some interest in books and literature. ”

“ Books and literature ! But I thought, Aunt Eleanor, you said that your most serious objection to my cousin Margaret was that she was literary ? ”

“ So I did, my love ; but there is a certain amount of literature that it is inexcusable to be ignorant of. You need not be as learned as Mr. Brittain, but you might derive great benefit from his society. It is an honor to a young girl to be noticed by such a man. ”

“ But I am such an ignoramus, he would laugh at me. ”

“ I doubt if he will trouble himself about you again. ”

“ I hope he will not, ” said Harry, “ for I do not like professors. ”

“ You seem to have the art of startling your admirers, I think. Mr. Kennett would be here at this moment if some deed of yours had not forbidden it. At least so thinks his sister. ”

Mrs. Fanning had been both surprised and disappointed that Mr. Kennett did not accompany his sister. She suspected there was some reason other than the one assigned — that he was tired of watering-places ; but she was too politic to give any expression to her suspicion, well-knowing that Mrs. Dean would soon impart all the information she had on the subject ; nor had she long to wait. Mrs.

Dean soon poured into her patient ear querulous complaints of Ralph's unaccountable conduct. She was confident that Harry had made a deep impression, though he had never said so in words; but she had always noticed that he admired Harry, and paid her great attention. Sallie Hart had hinted that Harry was engaged; perhaps Harry himself had said or done something to keep him at a distance. And Mrs. Dean advised Mrs. Fanning to apply to Grace Innabee for information, as Harry was, or had been, very intimate with her, and she probably knew all of Harry's little secrets. But Mrs. Fanning had no wish to give Grace Innabee an opportunity to gossip. She preferred inquiring of Harry herself. She did not, would not, believe that Harry was entangled in any foolish engagement; she thought it a slander, and yet she could not conceal from herself that she felt some alarm.

Now Harry had felt no little unwillingness to acquaint her aunt with her opinion of Mr. Kennett, particularly since she had perceived that he was a special favorite with her. She was still more unwilling to make any disclosures concerning Mr. Thorne, nor did she even allude to poor Richard's unfortunate attachment. In short, she did not honor Mrs. Fanning with her confidence as one would have expected. She had found that there were some things her Aunt Eleanor would not laugh at. She did not intend to deceive her; she would have resented the imputation indignantly. She only meant to conceal those things of which she would not approve; nay, Harry even called it by a milder name, *avoiding* the mention of what she felt would cause her pain. She had neither the wish nor the intention to speak anything but the truth in answer to Mrs. Fanning's inquiries, though, she argued, she need not tell the whole truth; deceiving herself with the thought that there was no necessity for it. She forgot that truth always suffers when it is left to be extorted by necessity.

Considering the influences which had been brought to bear upon her in the course of her education, this laxity was not to be wondered at. Indeed, the wonder was that she had escaped with so few serious faults.

"Aunt Eleanor," said she, in reply to her aunt's last observation, "I do not keep Mr. Kennett from coming here, he is his own master."

"Come Harry, no evasions."

"I make no evasions; I freely own that I am glad that he is not here; for he is exceedingly disagreeable to me. I have found him both meddlesome and impertinent."

"Why Harry, you have certainly permitted some foolish prejudice to influence you."

"No indeed, aunt; I liked him well enough at first, but I have studied him well, and I have found him utterly unworthy not only of confidence, but of respect."

"Harry, this is strong language for a girl of your age to use about a man of acknowledged worth like Mr. Kennett. I know him well; he is a very different person from his shallow sister, I can assure you, and I insist upon knowing your reasons for your opinion."

"He made himself exceedingly officious" — Harry colored deeply, but faced the question, if not as bravely as she ought, at least as bravely as most of the present generation of flirting young ladies would have done under the circumstances — "about a Mr. Thorne."

"Ah! pray who is Mr. Thorne?" asked Mrs. Fanning, with some trepidation.

"He is Julia Cressing's cousin."

"And what did Mr. Kennett do to him?"

"Oh! nothing particularly, only Mr. Thorne is — is — well, — a beau of mine, and Mr. Kennett behaved shabbily both to him and to me."

"And are you *engaged* to Mr. Thorne, that you should be so enraged against Mr. Kennett?"

"Engaged? no indeed, ma'am; who says so?"

"Oh, no one; but I supposed so, from your vehemence. Pray who is Mr. Thorne?"

"He is Mr. Cressing's nephew, or Mrs. Cressing's nephew; I knew him at school."

"Harry, I did give you credit for more discernment. I do not know Mr. Thorne, but I am certain he is not Mr. Kennett's superior, and I very much doubt if he is his equal. I refrain from any reflections upon a school-girl flirtation; but I have already expressed to you my opinion of flirting, and I wish you distinctly to understand that it is a pastime in which you must no longer indulge. I could tell you numberless instances where it has ruined a young lady's prospects matrimonial. The Cressings, I know, are very excellent fashionable people, and I make no objection to Mr. Thorne's acquaintance, but this flirting, either with him

or any one else, must cease. And now go dress for dinner; and do get over that worried expression; it quite spoils your pretty face."

Mrs. Fanning was more inclined to believe in Mr. Kennett's love for Harry from this conversation than from his sister's report. The idea pleased her well, though fears of failure somewhat haunted her. Mr. Kennett, she thought, had arrived at that age when a man is either very much afraid, or very anxious to marry. If he were anxious, no exertions were necessary on her part; if he were afraid, the slightest attempt to allure him would but alarm. She therefore firmly refused to accede to Mrs. Dean's entreaties to write to him, or even to send him a message.

"No, Louisa," she would say, "I am no matchmaker, as you know. I will not lend myself to any such scheme."

It did not appear at all probable to her that Mr. Kennett would entangle himself elsewhere. When she looked at Harry's beautiful countenance, when she watched her light figure winding through the dance, the perfection of grace, when she listened to the entrancing melody of her voice, she felt sure that she must have made a breach in the hitherto impregnable heart of Ralph Kennett. Perhaps some trifling flaw had been too plainly visible to his fastidious eyes. She did not believe that the crime of flirtation could be unpardonable in his sight; he had flirted somewhat himself, if report spoke truth. Nor could a man who had seen so much of women take exception to the very moderate affectation to which Harry was addicted. She concluded, therefore, that he must have been repulsed by some of her *eccentricities*. Flirting and affectation she had already directed her thunder against, but in regard to the last-named defect, she pursued a remarkable policy. She determined to leave Harry at full liberty to follow her own bent, in the expectation that the evil would cure itself. She knew that Harry would not bear too tight a rein, and besides, she loved her; it was very hard not to be indulgent toward her.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE MINIATURE.



**W**HATEVER Mrs. Fanning did, she did with a good grace. She now laughed at Harry, and with her, always provided that she were not guilty of flirting. That impolitic practice she always frowned upon. And Harry, who fancied that she had disburdened her conscience when she had only stifled it, peremptorily hushed any little expostulatory cry it might utter, and indulged her little whims and fancies with great delight.

The heat proved as excessive at Myrtle Springs as it had ever been in Netherford. The devotees of the billiard saloon, and the ten-pin alley still frequented those loitering grounds, but many who had hitherto been in the habit of attending merely as lookers-on, began to prefer the cool and quiet of their own cabins. Mrs. Dean generally sat with Mrs. Fanning, who deserved great praise for the exemplary patience with which she listened to that lady's never-ending complaints of "Ralph."

Thus they sat, one sultry morning in August, Mrs. Fanning plying her fan, and Mrs. Dean her tongue.

"I declare, Mrs. Fanning," said she, "I really do not know what to make of Ralph. I never knew him to be content for such a length of time before in a little obscure place among the mountains; he who enjoys company so much and would be the life of this place. It is his duty to come here, any how; Mr. Dean is obliged to be on his plantation at this season, and I declare I am so nervous at the idea of being left here without a protector, that my health really suffers from it. Oh dear! I never shall improve at this rate!"

"La! Louisa," said Mrs. Fanning with a pleasant laugh,

“how childish you are! You cannot want a protector so long as we are here, you know. As to your brother, let him enjoy himself his own way.”

“He always would do that,” said Mrs. Dean, “he is the most obstinate, headstrong boy in the world. I would give anything to see him well married and settled. I never shall be easy about him until he is, he is so liable to be led astray by any passing impulse.”

Mrs. Fanning put up her fan to conceal a smile, for Mr. Kennett, as every one knew, had never shown any disposition to be led astray by impulse. “Perhaps there is some lady-love in the case,” said she.

“Oh! dear Mrs. Fanning, you torture me! Surely you cannot think that Ralph would bring some coarse mountaineer home with him? How can you suppose such an absurdity?”

“It is you who have supposed the absurdity,” said Mrs. Fanning, with another laugh; “I said nothing about a mountaineer. Why, mercy on us, Harry!” she exclaimed, as Miss Vane appeared in the doorway. She was bare-headed, one hand held a scrubby-looking and huge bouquet of such flowers as the heats of summer had not yet consumed, while the other gathered up the skirt of a delicately dotted purple muslin, thereby displaying a tucked cambric somewhat soiled by grass stains, and a pair of pretty little slippered feet, to which the sand and gravel were clinging in a rather disfiguring manner.

“Mercy on us, child!” cried her aunt, “Where have you been?”

“I’ve been roaming, I’ve been roaming,  
Where the meadow dew is sweet,  
And I’m coming, and I’m coming  
With its pearls upon my feet!”

sang Miss Vane in a clear, sweet voice. With her bouquet in her hand she sang the song through, with many little burlesque actions, finishing the whole with an elaborate courtesy, and bursting into a merry laugh. Her aunt laughed too. Mrs. Dean only said,

“Dear me, what spirits,” and sighed.

“I want to tell you, auntie, I grew so tired of that everlasting bump, bump, bumping. I could not stand it. There is no use in trying to explain tenpins to me, I never will



think it other than a stupid game. I never could see the fun of rolling balls at a set of staring, stupid pegs that *won't* get out of the way, and stand up there to be knocked down ; and then running to the blackboard and figuring away with a piece of chalk. Why it as bad as doing sums ; and I always said that if I left school I never would have anything to do with chalk, and figures, and blackboards again."

"But why did you run away from your friends? You might have stayed to look on if you did not choose to join the players."

"It is demoralizing, Aunt Eleanor, it positively is. I could not stay there without laughing at fat old Mrs. Harris, puffing and blowing, and running almost within arm's reach of the pins, and then kicking up her frock behind every time she threw a ball. And Miss Susan Innibee, making a little courtesy every time she made a ten strike, and Mr. Baker swinging his arm twenty or thirty times before he could make up his mind to let go his ball, so I remembered that little Mollie Hunt told me there were some bachelor's buttons in the old garden, and I went to look for them. Mr. Sutton thought he would be very amusing, so he hid my hat, and I went off without it. But I found my bachelor's buttons, and other things beside, for over the stone wall I was sure I heard a spring, so I climbed, and I tore my dress beautifully, just look here ! But that is nothing ; see, I found 'a yellow sun-flower by the brook.' Oh, you need not laugh," said she, shaking her head at her aunt, "I can quote. I know that line of poetry because I learned it from Mr. Paul."

"What became of all your beaux, Harry ; did none of them go with you?" said Mrs. Fanning.

"Oh, I had no beau but Mr. Paul, and why should he go? He had on his pretty striped socks and shiny pumps ; they would have been ruined."

Mrs. Fanning laughed again, and Mrs. Dean sighed to herself, "Heart whole, and fancy free ! Oh Ralph, Ralph, what opportunities you are losing."

Harry having said her say, sat quietly arranging her plebeian bouquet, but glancing at the open door beyond, she saw her uncle stooping over something on the ground with an air of absorbing interest.

"What is Uncle John doing there, I wonder? I mean to go and see."

Under the hickory-tree stood Mr. Brittain, examining something he held in his hand. Scattered around Mr. Fanning were rods and lines, little tin boxes, gayly painted floats, and other fishing gear.

"Oh! Uncle John, Uncle John!" cried Harry, "are you going fishing? Do let me go with you."

Mr. Fanning was too much absorbed to hear, but Mr. Brittain laid down the fish-hook he was examining, and answered for him,

"We are going to Bennet's Pool; it is about two miles from here. If it is not too far, perhaps you might go."

"Oh! no, that is not too far! I could walk twice that distance; I will go get ready." And throwing down her flowers she rushed back to her aunt's room.

"What now, Harry?" said Mrs. Fanning.

"I am going with Uncle John fishing; where is my calico dress? Do somebody help me to get ready! Where is Phebe?"

"Harry you will be tired to death!"

"Oh no, I will not, Aunt Eleanor, do not say a word against it. Where is that Phebe? Phebe, Phebe!" cried she, kicking off her slippers, "get me some thick shoes!"

'Tis, oh! to be  
A fisherman's wife,  
A fisherman's wife,  
And live by the sea!

Where is Phebe? why doesn't she come?"

But Phebe was gone on an errand for Mr. Fanning, and could not hear.

"Where in the world is that old rascal Jake? Why can't he come along?" exclaimed Mr. Fanning impatiently, while Harry was dressing. "You Phebe!" he called to Mrs. Fanning's maid who was coming up the hill with a luncheon basket, "You Phebe, is Jake ever coming?"

"Yes Massa!" answered Jake for himself, now appearing behind Phebe, "I'se come 'cordin' to contrac', sir; it's not past nine."

Mr. Fanning was very impatient; he could hardly wait for Jake to come up, but stretching out his hand, he said,

"Well, have you got the bait?"

"Yes sir!" said Jake, producing something tied up in an old red silk handkerchief, which upon being untied disclosed a gourd full of squirming, disgusting worms.

"Ah!" cried Mr. Fanning, with the rapture of an amateur, "what fine fellows!" And down he went on his knees again to empty the bait into a little tin case painted blue, with the word "Bait" in bright yellow letters. Near by was another larger box, painted green, and ornamented with a fish.

Old Jake stood by looking on; he evidently did not approve. He was an old and experienced fisherman, and the manager and pilot of all the expeditions of every description ever projected at the Springs, and in this capacity he was accustomed to being regarded as an infallible oracle.

"Massa Fanning," at last he said, as if he could no longer restrain the expression of his opinion, "what for you do dat? De bait is cooler and more satisfied like in de gourd."

Mr. Fanning's only reply was an impatient gesture.

"I'se never seen any of them 'trivances ketch much fish yit," continued old Jake, appealing to Mr. Brittain, who being a professor in the College, he thought would listen to his philosophy. "You see, sir, de science of 'em is dis; dey is like nothin' in de heavens above, nor in de eart' beneaf, nor in the waters under de eart' more specially; consequently de fish is oneasy at 'em and won't come nigh."

Harry and Mrs. Fanning sitting on the door-step began to laugh. Mr. Fanning was irritated. "Nonsense!" said he. "How can you laugh at such folly? Sylvo, can you tell which way is the wind?"

"I think," said Mr. Brittain with a little hesitation, "it may be — east."

"De win' is east," said Jake with solemnity.

"East? Not a bit of it; due south," said Mr. Fanning dexterously manipulating his handkerchief, that spite of all his efforts would show the wind anywhere but south. "South, due south," said he, obstinately, and quickly stuffing his handkerchief into his pocket, he quoted the lines,

"When the wind is in the south  
It blows the bait in the fishes' mouth."

Mrs. Fanning stifled a laugh, and even Mrs. Dean was beguiled into a smile.

"Do you think it an unpropitious day, eh, Sylvo?" said Mr. Fanning, rendered faint-hearted by his wife's laugh.

"I am not able to say," said Mr. Brittain, "but I imagine not."

"Let us start then," said Mr. Fanning, leading the way. Mr. Brittain and Harry followed, and Jake with a campstool, and Phebe with the luncheon-basket brought up the rear. Said Jake to Phebe,

"Dere is rain in dis win'; mark what I says."

Their road was rough, sunny, and dusty for about a quarter of a mile, but Harry trudged along uncomplainingly now lingering behind to gather flowers, now running ahead to follow a butterfly. She was the first to reach the narrow, shady lane leading to the wood which should be traversed before they could arrive at their destination. In her zeal to be the first to find the enchanted spot, as Bennet's Pool seemed to her, she hurried on, heedless of every obstacle. With such facility and rapidity did she make her way through the tangled brushwood, that Mr. Brittain could never be in time to render her any assistance. Her zeal met its adequate reward; hers was the glory of being first at the destined goal, a fact which she announced by exclaiming,

"Here it is at last! Oh! how pretty!"

She had quitted the party without losing sight of them, to follow a path which ascended a little eminence, and long before she saw the water she could hear its cool splashing over the rocks. The path led her to the brink of a small precipice, over which the waters of the creek tumbled into the deep and placid pool below. Huge beech-trees stretched their boughs across this pool, and shut out the scorching sun, admitting a ray here and there to gild the variegated mosses wandering over their gnarled roots, or clinging to the slippery rocks lying under the cascade. Where the water dashed upon these rocks it bubbled and foamed, but the pool itself was unbroken by a ripple; the water could scarcely be seen to move, until it met with a second fall, a little way off, and then pursued its bubbling route over a shallow, pebbly bed, under a rustic bridge, and finally was lost to hearing and to sight in the thicket beyond. There was nothing grand or imposing in this pretty little cascade; it was but one of the many charming little pictures of which the book of Nature is full, but Harry found in it much to delight her. Hers was not the noisy admiration characteristic of many professed lovers of nature;

she had no exclamations of rapture, she stood perfectly silent above, while her uncle and Mr. Brittain sought advantageous positions below. Now she studied the sunlight on the mosses, now she looked up at the smooth-barked beeches, the "mingling oaks and elms," where the birds were flitting, and then she bent her eyes on the cool waters below. Mr. Brittain, whom travel had made acquainted with many magnificent views of this description, was surprised at the evident delight pictured upon her face.

"You will see to much better advantage from below, Miss Vane," said he.

Harry started. Whatever *castle in the water* she was building, as she gazed intently upon the pool, was immediately abandoned. She found her way down to the level ground below, and springing like a fawn upon a projecting rock, she called for a fishing-line. Mr. Brittain went to seek one, and found also the courage that always forsook him in the parlor or ball-room. Leaving Mr. Fanning to select his own grounds, while Phebe sought a safe place for the luncheon basket, and old Jake seated himself on the uprooted stump of a tree, Mr. Brittain sat himself down by Harry.

"Ah, Mr. Brittain," said she, sincerely surprised by this attention, "this is very kind of you."

Some kind fairy had reversed the spell which had fettered his hitherto hesitating speech, and Mr. Brittain replied with almost as much ease as Mr. Kennett could have done, —

"If I had been Mr. Sutton, or Mr. Innibee, you would have invited me to take a seat."

"I don't know;" said Harry, "I would rather have you here than either, for you will help to fish. Mr. Paul would have wanted to sketch me, and Mr. Sutton would have been always comparing me to a mermaid."

"I like the word *siren* much better," said Mr. Brittain; "*mermaid* always calls up an image of an hideous deformity, half-fish, half-woman. My idea of a siren is a beautiful water-witch, who sings — as you do."

Harry made him a playful little bow, and began singing,

"Good friar, good friar,  
Come hither with me."—

She stopped suddenly, and blushing very deeply, busied herself with her fishing-tackle. If poor Mrs. Brittain had

heard that burst of song, how miserable she would have been.

"You would make one believe you to be the veritable *Lurlei Lei* herself," said Mr. Brittain. "This is a better line Miss Vane."

Harry took the line, but instead of casting it into the water, she placed the end of the rod upon the rock, and supporting it upright with her hand, she leaned her cheek against it, and said, looking at Mr. Brittain,—

"I once saw a picture of the *Lurlei Lei*; she was singing to a man in a boat: the very boat seemed to be enchanted, and to move toward her,"—making a little gesture with her unoccupied hand. "Her head and shoulders were seen above a bank of floating water-lilies, and her long, golden hair streamed over her shoulders, and lay upon the dark green leaves. She was very beautiful, but she had treacherous eyes."

"It is the most beautiful of all the legends of the Rhine," said Mr. Brittain.

"I do not like her," said Harry, as if she were speaking of a real person; "I think Undine is so much better than she."

"Undine has more of the human element; we can sympathize more with her," said Mr. Brittain.

"What a pity there are no water sprites," said Harry; "nor fairies, nor such things; how one hates to outgrow the illusions of childhood. I can remember how I used to run down to the meadow behind my grandmother's garden and sit in the twilight to watch for the fairies; but they never came."

"But the loss of these illusions is compensated when our riper judgment is enabled to pierce the veil of fiction and discover the truths which it conceals. All the fables of mythology, all legends that are not historical, are allegories."

"Ah!" cried Harry, "how I hate that word! I could have thrown the book at my own grandmother's head when she explained to me that Pilgrim's Progress was an allegory; I have never opened it since." And she cast her line into the water as if she were determined to waste no more time. But the fish did not bite as soon as she could have desired.

"Uncle John!" cried she to Mr. Fanning, who was

seated on his camp-stool close to the brink, "how many fish have you caught?"

"It is impossible to catch anything; you keep such an everlasting chattering no fish will bite. Do try to keep quiet."

Harry obeyed for a few moments, and then turning to Mr. Brittain, she said,

"Why *don't* they bite? I think this is very stupid."

"You must have patience; I doubt not that you have the 'inquiring, searching, observing wit,' but you must have patience and hope also, if you are going to be 'a brother of the angle.' You must lay to heart what old Izaak Walton says of these necessary virtues."

"Who is he?" said Harry.

"Did you never read the Complete Angler?"

"What is that? A fishing-book?"

"Yes," he answered, hesitating a little.

"No, I never heard of it before."

"Do then, Miss Vane, let me advise you to read it. I have my copy with me, and will lend it to you with pleasure. You will be charmed—"

"No, thank you," said Harry, dryly, "I hate books!" She could hardly have uttered a sentiment more shocking to Mr. Brittain.

"Hate books? Why, you would not destroy all learning, all libraries, would you?"

"Oh! no, they will do very well for men, but women have no need of them. I think books do women harm. There is Miss Edna now"—She stopped, and looked at her auditor.

"Go on, if you please," said he gravely; "I would like to hear your arguments, and I am incapable of repeating anything you may say."

"Oh, no sir; if I thought so I should not like to talk to you; I dislike people destitute of honor. But I think I will not finish what I was about to say, because I dislike Miss Edna, and therefore I should not speak of her. But I cannot help thinking that women who like books are very disagreeable, and I have observed that gentlemen think so, too."

"A woman who is fond of books and learning need not necessarily be disagreeable, and it is only the pedantic display of learning that gentlemen dislike. A woman may be

well-informed '*sans citer les auteurs, sans dire de grands mots,*' and a wise woman will know sometimes '*ignorer les choses qu'elle sait.*'"

"Ah," said Harry, "but what then is the use of learning if one is to seem to know nothing? It would be only acting a part. Why should not one be proud, if one is superior to others in knowledge. If I were learned I am sure I should parade it. Besides, a pretence of ignorance seems as bad to me as any other sort of pretence."

Mr. Brittain was silent, not because he was convinced, but because he thought Harry an original. He rather regretted that he had not undertaken to teach her Spanish. He had no doubt that she would richly repay culture, and he surprised himself wishing that he might have the direction of her studies. But Harry was thinking of nothing in the world but the fish then nibbling at her hook. In great excitement she drew to land a little perch no larger than her hand, and, while Mr. Brittain baited her hook again, she ran with it to her uncle.

Now Mr. Fanning had not caught a single fish. He had moved his camp-stool from point to point, and finally induced Jake, who had already taken several of the finny tribe, to yield him the up-rooted stump. It was excessively warm, and the mosquitos were very annoying, so that the amateur fisherman was in no very amiable mood.

"Keep it yourself child, do not bring it to me," he said, as Harry offered her fish. "I will have none but those I catch myself."

So Harry returned to her rock, where Mr. Brittain with a sassafras bough waged war against the mosquitos. She cast in her line, expecting to be favored with another bite immediately, but she was disappointed. Her line caught in the bushes as she jerked it out too hastily, and while Mr. Brittain disentangled it, the mosquitos troubled her, and she abandoned the sport in disgust.

"I wish Mr. Kennett were here," said Mr. Brittain; "he is such an expert angler."

"Oh!" said Harry, with a gesture of impatience, "I do not! I am glad he is not here, for I do not like him."

Mr. Brittain's countenance showed the surprise he felt, and he rashly undertook to defend his friend.

"Oh, please," said Harry, "say no more; it is a very disagreeable subject to me. I know he is your friend, and



I honor you for defending him, but you cannot change my opinion. I wonder if Uncle John ever will be hungry," continued she, looking at Mr. Fanning. Fortune had at length favored him, and there he sat, oblivious of everything but the fish he was taking from his hook.

"Are you not hungry, Mr. Brittain?" said Harry.

"Are you?"

"Yes, sir, very."

"Let us have something to eat, then," said Mr. Brittain, going for the basket.

Harry fortified herself with a sandwich, and advised Mr. Brittain to do the same. "Now," said she, "I believe I might enjoy a book; did not you bring one?"

"Unfortunately," said Mr. Brittain with regret, "I did not. But stay" — he added, as a sudden thought occurred to him, "I have something which may amuse you quite as much; a miniature I found in the cars last June. I was returning to Netherford; I had been up to Zeigler's station where one of the students was ill of a fever. This was lying on the seat." And he put into Harry's hands a miniature of a very peculiar appearance. It was of an oval shape, set in the centre of an oak-leaf carved of some delicate wood, which appeared to have been painted green, but was now much faded. The painting on the ivory represented a female figure, the face concealed by the hands which were small and delicate. The hair was a pale gold; a crimson shawl was draped about the figure, and one arm was adorned by a curious bracelet, the clasp of which consisted of three or four oak leaves with acorns. On the back of the leaf of wood in which the miniature was inserted was an ambrotype of a very young man with black eyes and hair. Harry looked at this bauble earnestly. "Can you not find the owner?" said she.

"No; I have advertised it, but no one has claimed it. I did not describe it in the advertisement, however, and perhaps that may be the reason why the owner has not appeared. But I do not care to part with it, I have formed an attachment for my mysterious miniature. I am haunted by that young man's face; I have certainly seen it before, but where? I cannot tell. I would like to take away that lady's hands, — but they may hide a very homely face."

"No, no," said Harry, warmly; "I am sure there is a lovely face behind those hands."

"She must have been a priestess of the Druids," continued Mr. Brittain, "by the symbolical oak leaves and acorns. I showed it to Mr. Kennett, and he plead hard for the possession of it. He has grown quite romantic about it, and thinks, like you, that those hands hide an angelic vision, and declares that he will never marry until he finds the original of that picture. I believe he even prays for her, as I did for my wife, that" —

"Your wife!" screamed Harry, the numerous hints about Mrs. Brittain's objections to her son's marrying rushing forcibly to her mind, and suggesting the very improbable circumstance of a secret marriage, and a concealed wife. "Where does she stay?"

"In a castle in the air, at present," said Mr. Brittain, laughing.

"Oh! but you said you prayed for her; what an odd notion!"

"The thought is not mine; I got it from Tupper when I was quite a young man. It was the only thing in his Proverbial Philosophy which struck me with any force, and I immediately put it in practice. I have left it off lately because I imagine that I am not to have 'a wife of my youth.'"

"Ah, Bah! old Tupper! I hate his Proverbial Philosophy as I do an Etiquette Book."

"I thought you never read books."

"I do not; but when one is at school how can one help getting a few things beat into one's head? We used to parse in that book, and some of us girls had a little book we wrote ourselves, called Antidote for Tupper, contradicting everything he said. And we wrote a set of maxims in his style to guide the conduct of boarding-school girls."

"I should like to see them very much," said Mr. Brittain; "they must be very entertaining."

"I do not think it would be right to act up to them," said Harry.

"Hey!" exclaimed Mr. Fanning, "what is that?" A low, ominous rumbling was heard in the distance. "Thunder, by George!"

They had been so intently occupied, that they had not noticed the gathering clouds which now hung dark and low. Even Phebe, who apparently had nothing to do but look around, had been too busy playing off her young mistress'

airs and graces to the bewilderment of old Jake, to note the coming storm. A few "prelusive drops" pattered through the leaves and fell into the "dimpled pool." Old Jake nodded his head sagaciously to Phebe, as much as to say, "I told you so." Mr. Brittain looked at Harry in great concern. They were fully two miles from home, and the rain was already beginning to fall.

"I am so glad!" said she. "This is just the most delightful termination the day could have. I do believe you are more afraid of the rain than I am."

"I am uneasy on your account," said Mr. Brittain. "It will be a very heavy rain."

Harry had put on her great shaker bonnet, and lifting the skirt of her dress over her head, she said, "I can make a *pente* of my dress, as Mlle. Virginie de la Tour did on a similar occasion, only, unfortunately, you are too tall to take Paul's place."

How Miss Edna would have been shocked! And Mrs. Brittain! And Mrs. Fanning!! But Mr. Brittain thought it the prettiest picture he had ever seen, as he looked at the roguish eyes peeping from the impromptu umbrella.

Mr. Fanning had hurriedly packed up his fishing-tackle, and like a prudent general was taking steps to prevent the destruction of his commissary stores, that is to say, in any but the legitimate way. He was very hungry. "All of you come eat, come!" he said, helping himself bountifully. "Here Phebe, here Jake, take all you want."

A crashing among the bushes caused them to look round; a little twelve year old, white headed, sallow-faced boy was pushing his way through the thick undergrowth. The air was very close, though a faint breeze at intervals stirred the leaves, and then there came a flash, followed by a loud clap of thunder.

"Youens 'll get a precious sousing," said the boy, who had now worked his way up to the party. "It's a goin' to rain like hell!"

"Well!" said Harry, with a laugh, "I never knew before that there was anything in that place to quench thirst." Mr. Fanning seemed to have forgotten her presence until this moment. "A pretty case you will be in Harriet; you will be made sick by this."

"Dear uncle, I can stand it better than you."

"If youens is afraid o' water, youens can go up to pap's, but you'll be done skin-wetted afore you can git there."

"How far is it?"

"A matter of half a mile or so; by the short cut."

"Let us go then," said Mr. Fanning, for the rain was beginning to fall rapidly. Their guide led them through a path so thickly overgrown that in many places they were obliged to stoop very low in order to pass. Harry had found her *pente* a very inefficient protection, and therefore discarded it. The rain fell in torrents, and they were soon quite wet through. But Harry never lost her cheerful spirits. She trudged along by the white-headed boy, and charmed him by her condescension.

"Here is pap's!" at last, he cried; "but youens will have to climb this fence."

Mr. Brittain put down the rails for Harry, and they crossed the road, and entered a yard remarkable for its number of lombardy poplars and chicken-coops. Two men dressed in homespun came out from the piazza, pipes in mouth.

"Pap," said the boy, "here is some mighty wet folks."

The elder man advanced and welcomed them in homely fashion. "We have been fishing," explained Mr. Fanning, "and were caught in the rain."

"All right, sir; take seats. Much of a crowd this year?"

"Yes, sir, there are a good many, and we are in no plight to face a crowd. We have sent the servant for the hack, but in the mean time, could this young lady get some dry clothing?"

"Well, I dunno 'bout that," laughed Mr. Sammons, "my gals is all boys, and my ole woman is pretty considerable of a figure, but she is some at contriving."

Mrs. Sammons presently made her appearance at his bidding, a woman of gigantic proportions.

"Here is a young lady, Sary, has been and got a wetting, could you manage to get her some dry clothes?"

"Why, yes, to be shore! Ain't there that young stranger person up stairs? I can borry some of her."

"Well I be drot!" exclaimed her husband, dashing his hat on the floor in admiration. "If you ain't some in a perplexion! I never once thought of that."

"Come, follow me, miss," said Mrs. Sammons; and she led Harry through a narrow passage in which hung guns and fishing-rods, then up two or three steps, which they had to descend again, in order to allow the door to which they

led to be opened. This door disclosed a steep, narrow, and crooked stair, which led up to a story in the roof. A young lady was standing on the landing, but Harry did not perceive her until she reached the top of the stair herself, because she was behind her vast conductor.

"Well, Miss Marshy! I've made free to call on you in a strait. Here's a young lady has been caught in this rain, and is clear wet through, and it's plain I've got no clothes to put on her, ha! ha! ha!" And Mrs. Sammons wiped her face with her big check apron.

"Certainly," replied a sweet, lady-like voice. Harry looked up, and was immediately enraptured with the speaker. She was a young girl, of about her own age, but taller, though not so plump. Her attitude was mingled grace and dignity, her features severely regular, her complexion very fair and delicate, with very little color. Her hair of rich golden hue, was gathered into a large, plain knot behind. Her eyes were large, and blue, and very dark, and Harry thought them the most beautiful she had ever seen.

"I am Miss Vane," said she, extending her hand; "I am very sorry to trouble you."

"Oh, it is no trouble," said the young lady, taking the offered hand. But she did not tell her name; she only said, "Come into my room," and opened a door near by. Mrs. Sammons went down for Phebe, and the young lady opened her trunk and selected some clothing for Harry.

"This dress," said she, laying a calico on the bed, "is the shortest I have, and I notice that I am taller than you."

"Thank you," said Harry, "I am under so many obligations, that I hate to trouble you more, but if you could let me have a satchel to take my wet clothes home in? I will send all back to-morrow."

"Certainly," said the young lady again, "I will get you one."

She went into a little closet, near a dormer window, and presently returned with a leathern satchel, and giving it to Harry, said,

"As you will have your servant, I will retire."

Thus left alone, Harry did not immediately address herself to her toilette. She had introduced herself in the hope of hearing the young lady's name in return. Had it been revealed to her she might have thought very little about

it, but since she was kept in ignorance of it, her curiosity was strongly excited. While waiting for Phebe, therefore, and indeed after Phebe came, she busied herself with the books, of which there were a number in various languages, lying on the dressing table. But in none of them could she find any name but "Marcia," except in a little Bible, where the initials, "H. F." were written above the name of "Marcia." Her curiosity waxed more eager; there was one more book, a large, flat volume, which looked as if it might be an album, or scrap-book, or journal. "No," said Harry to herself, resolutely turning away, "no, I cannot look at that; perhaps I was wrong to look at any of them, but that must be private, and it shall be sacred. Much as I would like to know her name, I cannot, will not, look for it there." Then she examined the dainty linen laid on the bed for her use, but no name could she find but Marcia.

Harry had spent so much time in this idle search, that she was not dressed when her uncle sent her word that the hack had come. The rain had ceased, and the sun, now low in the west, was pouring a flood of sunshine through the little window; a bird on the cherry-tree, growing close beside, was singing his evening hymn, the yard was swarming with poultry clamorous for their food, the hounds had left their corner, and were racing round the yard, and Mr. Fanning was calling impatiently for his niece. But Harry, anxious for one more sight of the beautiful stranger, lingered on the stair as long as she dared. But she lingered in vain, and at last, in obedience to her uncle's repeated summons, she came out on the piazza.

"Well, sir," Mr. Sammons was saying, "so you won't stay and take pot-luck with us? My ole woman is some, I tell you, on risen bread and muffins."

Harry was very anxious to accept this invitation until Mrs. Sammons added, "You needn't feel oneasy 'bout facin' strangers, seein' as how these of ourn never comes down to tea." Then she wanted to get home as quickly as possible. She had determined that she would persuade her aunt to call on Mrs. Sammons's strangers, and she was all impatience to be back at the Springs in order to relate her adventure, and propose the visit. Indeed she was so full of this she quite forgot to ask Mrs. Sammons the young lady's name. As soon as the hack drove off with them, she began, —

"Oh! uncle! I have seen such a beautiful creature! Did you learn the name of those people?"

"Sammons," said Mr. Fanning. "Sylvester he is a daring hunter, I should think, if all he says is true."

"Oh! uncle, I don't mean those people! I mean the strangers staying with them, the young lady who lent me her clothes. I have the greatest curiosity to know her name. Do you think Aunt Eleanor will go with me to call on her? I really think we ought."

"How should I know anything about them?" said Mr. Fanning; "I saw nothing of them."

Mr. Fanning was a man of hobbies. The one he rode at present was rustic amusements. He had been somewhat disappointed in his fishing jaunt, but he was anticipating some rare sport in hunting. He had passed his time, while his niece was changing her wet clothes, in questioning Mr. Sammons about his early hunting frolics, and Mr. Sammons was very happy to answer. Thus neither of them thought of the strangers who had taken a temporary refuge with the Sammons family. But Harry could think of nothing else, and she talked of nothing else, all the way home, while Mr. Brittain sat a silent listener.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### BACHELOR'S BUTTONS.



THE rain had wonderfully refreshed both the animate and inanimate objects about the Springs. The young ladies looked brighter and fresher, and the young gentlemen had lost that air of langour they had worn for a few days past. Even Mrs. Brittain, usually so retiring, had been tempted to make her appearance on the hotel piazza, and there she sat in quiet conversation with some elderly dames, when the hack drove into the great gate.

Mrs. Brittain was an anxious mother, but she was an unselfish one. She enjoyed her son's society more than that of any other person in the world; but as it was quite impossible for her to accompany him in the long walks he liked so well, she stayed behind without a murmur.

The days were past when the dread of his drowning himself, or of his breaking his arms or legs had haunted her, she now only feared his breaking his heart; but as she did not believe that he could find the means to accomplish that in the woods and wilds about Myrtle Springs, she saw him depart with an easy mind.

When she heard that hack number two had been ordered to go to Sammons's for some gentlemen who had been fishing and were caught in the rain, she felt sure that her heart's idol was one of them, and, contrary to her usual custom, went up to wait for him on the hotel piazza. When the hack drove past without stopping, she supposed that her son would get out at her own cabin. Great was her consternation when she beheld it pass her door also and stop, a little farther down, on the opposite side of the way, at Mrs. Fanning's rooms.

Mrs. Brittain had not Mrs. Fanning's enviable faculty of dissimulating her displeasure. She could not smile and joke when her heart was bursting. It was quite as much as she could do to refrain from giving utterance to the thoughts that tormented her. It was far more than she could do, to sit quietly and let things take their course.

Mrs. Fanning's cabin was not so far, but that any one standing on her porch could be plainly recognized from the piazza of the hotel, and when Mrs. Brittain saw her son dismount, and then assist Miss Vane to descend from the hack, and not only this, but actually walk up the steps with her and stand there chatting with Mrs. Fanning, Mrs. Dean, and several others, it was more than she could bear.

Down the steps she almost ran, and quickly she walked away to her own little room, while a group of young ladies and gentlemen, chiefly Netherford people tittered audibly.

What poor Mrs. Brittain's feelings were as she fidgeted about her room, may be better imagined than described. Her son, as she peeped through the window at him, appeared to be perfectly satisfied. He was listening to, and laughing at Harry's account of their day's experience. Of course his mother could not hear what was going on, but she could see that he was very well entertained, and in no hurry to leave. Indeed, he had no idea of leaving before Miss Harry should have made an end of what she had to say.

"Oh! Aunt Eleanor!" had been her first exclamation. "I do wish you had been with us!"



"Thank you," Mrs. Fanning replied, laughing, "but I am very glad that I was not. I never fancied a walk in the rain. But who supplied you with these clothes? Look, Louisa, what a very pretty sleeve; I do not think this could belong to any common person."

"No, indeed!" said Harry. "That is the best part of the story, the grand *finale*. Oh! Aunt, such a beautiful creature!"

"Whom do you mean? Really, Harry, I wish you would talk more connectedly."

"Well, I will try," said Harry. She then proceeded to give a graphic account of their pastime at Bennett's Pool, though she forgot to mention the miniature. She told of the white-haired boy, their walk in the rain, and gave a description of Mrs. Sammons; "mam," as she called her in contradistinction to "pap." Then followed an enthusiastic praise of her unknown heroine. "Oh! but she was so beautiful! Was she not beautiful, Mr. Brittain? Oh! but I forget, you did not see her; you do not know what you have missed."

"What was her name?" asked her aunt.

"Ah! that is the worst part of it; I do not know her name, I could not find it out. I introduced myself to her in the most proper manner, but she would not take the hint. I peeped into her books, for she had a tableful, and some were German, and some Italian, but all I found was "*Marcia*," which is little better than nothing. If I do not find out her name one way or another, I shall believe her to be a vision."

Here a hitherto untried means of discovering the name of this mysterious stranger, suddenly occurred to Harry, and she dived into the pocket of her borrowed calico. To her amazement, her hand came in contact with a letter! Mrs. Fanning and Mrs. Dean were talking to Mr. Brittain, and no one noticed her sudden change of countenance. The sly little damsel instantly snatched her hand to her mouth, exclaiming,

"Dear me! I've stuck my finger."

Now Harry ought not to be judged too strictly for this. She had always had a nice sense of honor about reading anything belonging to other people, and since Mr. Kennett's delinquency had come to her knowledge, she was, if possible, more scrupulous than before. She had hardly expected

to find anything in the pocket, and when she felt the letter she was startled.

Mr. Kennett's crime rushed instantly to her mind. She understood, perhaps, something of his temptation, but she also felt strong to resist, and in the fear that the confusion would bring the letter to light, the letter which she would not read, would not look at for worlds, she acted out her little pretence, and made her finger, innocent of any pain whatever, shield the secret of her unknown friend.

Relieved to find that no one was noticing her, she resumed the subject of the mysterious stranger, as soon as a pause offered.

"Dear Auntie, will you not go to-morrow to call on her?"

"On whom, child?"

"My beautiful stranger."

"Oh, my dear! it is impossible, to-morrow."

"Well then, next day?"

"I will see about it, Harry; but this is no time to discuss it; think, child, how late it is. Go—go—" pushing her gently, "you must make yourself presentable for tea. Mr. Dunbar arrived this afternoon, and has been inquiring for you; I would not have him to meet you in this costume."

"Mr. Dunbar? Oh, no indeed!" exclaimed Miss Harry, and vanished.

Mr. Brittain at last bethought himself that his own costume was neither comfortable nor admissible, and departed for his cabin.

Once within her own room, Harry found the temptation to look at that letter too strong to be resisted.

"I will only look at the outside, there can be no harm in that," said she to herself, and out came the letter. A neat, thick envelope, sealed with a letter *M*, and directed to—  
"Mr. Henry Thorne, Netherford!"

Harry felt her heart stand still. She did not love Mr. Thorne, but she looked upon him as her own peculiar property, and she was very much disposed to be indignant that any other girl should have the privilege of writing to her property. She believed that Mr. Thorne loved her, but she would have been far more indignant, if he had presumed to be offended because of any one writing to her. Mr. Thorne had a sister, she knew, but that sister was married, and

older than he, while this "Marcia" was evidently younger. Then Harry remembered the initials "H. T." that she had seen in the Bible.

"Well!" thought she, "this is a curious thing! If it were not so very curious I should be angry. I am more than ever determined to find out who she is. I must ask Aunt Eleanor to go to-morrow." And she slipped the letter into the pocket again.

"Miss Harry, how long is you gwine to stan' there studyin'? I'se axed you three times what dress I must get out," said Phebe.

"Oh! I do not care; my corn-colored barège," said Harry, beginning to undress. "And Phebe, you must fold up this dress carefully, and to-morrow early, *early* now, mind you, all these clothes must be done up. And Phebe, have you taken out my dress?"

"Yes'm."

"Well, I can do everything else; but do you go down to the garden, the old garden — not the new one — and away off in the left-hand corner you will find a great bunch of bachelor's buttons. I want you to bring me never so many to dress my hair."

"My sakes, Miss Harry! it's so dark, I'se skeared o' snakes."

"Oh! pshaw! no snakes are going to bite you when you are waiting on me, do not you know that? Run now, that is a good Phebe — hurry — I *must* have them."

Phebe, thus coaxed, set off. She was hardly gone when Mrs. Fanning knocked at the door, saying,

"Harry, tea is ready; are you?"

"Not quite," said Harry, meaning not at all.

"Well, my dear, your uncle and I will go on. Mrs. Dean says she will wait for you, and Mr. Dunbar will go with you."

"Very well, ma'am. Please give him my love."

"Harry! Harry!" exclaimed Mrs. Fanning in horror, opening the door, "my child, how can you be so thoughtless? Mr. Dunbar is on the porch."

"Oh!" said Harry, her hand on her mouth, "I did not think of that!"

"And you are not nearly ready? Do not keep Mr. Dunbar waiting, and see that you behave discreetly."

This was Mrs. Fanning's parting injunction. But Harry

paid little attention to it. She sorely tried the patience of Mr. Dunbar and Mrs. Dean; for though she was quite dressed when Phebe returned with the bachelor's buttons, it required some time to string them together in the manner in which she chose to wear them. Mrs. Dean never again consented to act as her chaperone, but Mr. Dunbar felt amply rewarded for waiting when he saw all eyes turned towards Harry in admiration, as they took their seats at the tea-table.

From Mrs. Fanning's porch Mr. Brittain repaired to his mother's cabin, in which he also, had a room. Mrs. Brittain met him at the door.

"Oh! my son, how imprudent you are." She alluded to his wet clothing, but he thought of Miss Vane.

"And you have deceived me, too, Sylvester."

"Deceived you, ma'am? I do not understand you."

"You did not tell me you were going with Miss Vane."

"I did not know it ma'am. I had no idea when I left you, that I should spend the day in such agreeable company."

"Oh! Sylvio! how can you think that silly girl agreeable?"

"I do not find her silly, ma'am."

"Mrs. Fanning is the greatest match-maker in the state. I know all about her."

Mr. Brittain laughed. "She has no thought of me for a good match," said he.

"Do not be too sure of that, Sylvio. She knows ours is a good family, and she cannot avoid match-making, she has such talents for it. Did not she marry Margaret and Fannie Lee, Margaret Fanning's daughters, who had not a penny between them; did not she marry them to two of the wealthiest men in the state?"

"But I am very far from being a wealthy man, ma'am."

"You are very much mistaken if you think wealth is all Mrs. Fanning asks for. When Sophie Carew, Laura Fanning's daughter, came out with her thousands upon thousands, did she marry her to Mr. Dean? No, she let Louisa Kennett take Mr. Dean, and welcome; but she secured young Dr. Willis of Savannah for Sophie; young Dr. Willis, who had not a penny, but he was the great Doctor Willis' nephew. And the same way she did by Laura Fanning,

Charlie Fanning's daughter. Oh, I know her," said Mrs. Brittain, waxing warm.

"Well, mother," said Mr. Brittain, overwhelmed by these arguments, "no power, no arts on earth can make me marry a woman I do not love, and I am certainly not in love with Miss Vane."

"Then see her no more! Oh, my son, see her no more, while yet you are safe."

"But why should I see her no more? Suppose I should fall in love with her, what objection could there be?"

"Oh! Sylvio, she is totally unsuited to you, she is such a child; she would never have you," said Mrs. Brittain, contradicting herself unawares. Now had she omitted the latter clause, she might have made a far deeper impression. Mr. Brittain could see, had seen plainly enough, that Harry was, to all outward appearances, unsuited to him, but he permitted himself to admire her without acknowledging that he could possibly think of her for a wife. Nevertheless, it did not please him to hear his mother say that Miss Vane would never listen to his suit. It almost piqued him into the determination to try to make her like him; he did not say *love* him, he was far too modest for that. He had given his mother the assurance that he was not in love with Miss Vane, but he knew not that he had already taken the fever. He would not acknowledge to himself what motive induced him to pay such scrupulous attention to his dress that evening, but certain it is, he was very hard to please.

His mother declined going to tea, and under the circumstances, Mr. Brittain was not sorry. He never attended any other lady to and from the table, but as he was off duty to-night, he intended to take tea with Harry. But Harry was so surrounded that his courage quite forsook him at sight of such an array of nonsense talkers. He took his tea alone.

Mrs. Brittain, meanwhile, sat in her room comparatively easy in mind. As it was dark, she had not observed the extraordinary pains he had taken with his dress. She knew that he never danced, never cared, indeed, to enter the ball-room, where alone he might find Miss Vane. She knew not of that seat by the window where her son listened to the song of the siren.

Mr. Brittain, disappointed at not finding a seat by Harry at tea, sought his accustomed seat by the window, in the

hope that she would sing. But Harry had lingered late at tea, and when she left the table, they were already dancing in the ball-room.

Mr. Brittain might have thought of the "sun upon an Easter-day," of the feet like mice that "stole in and out," of the "wave o' the sea," but he did not. He only felt that as he was disappointed of hearing Miss Vane sing, he would fain see her dance. Nor, after he reached the ball-room, did one of those famous similes occur to him, though Miss Vane, dancing in her corn-colored *barége*, might vie with an Easter sun.

The dancers were very merry; Mr. Dunbar, resplendent in a blue coat and brass buttons, was immortalizing himself by steps the most extraordinary, for which there are no names. He knew little or nothing of the figures, but he atoned for his ignorance by his agility, and the fun-loving young people were almost ready to expire with laughter.

Miss Vane was his partner, and Mr. Brittain soon perceived that while she was not so boisterous in her laughter as some of the others, she enjoyed the fun perhaps more than any, and while she laughed, she contrived to make Mr. Dunbar believe she was admiring.

When her bouncing partner returned to her side, out of breath, and out of time, and stood wiping his face with his highly perfumed handkerchief, she would say, with a scarcely perceptible twinkle in her mirthful eyes,

"Ah, Mr. Dunbar, how I do enjoy seeing you dance, you are so agile. I would rather dance with you than with any one else. I have enjoyed myself so much this evening."

Mr. Brittain was quite near enough to hear this, and all in the room might see her, the instant Mr. Dunbar dashed off to execute one of his marvels, bury her face in her hands, and shrug up her pretty white shoulders in a paroxysm of laughter. Mr. Brittain was not pleased, and yet he stayed, for the instant Miss Vane's hands came down from her face, and caught up her floating drapery, that her mouse-like feet might glide about unencumbered, his anger and contempt vanished. He saw that she was very beautiful, particularly when she laughed, and he almost laughed himself when he looked at Mr. Dunbar, and thought Miss Vane's laughter, after all, excusable.

But Mr. Brittain was not the only person inclined to disapprove of Harry's behavior. Mrs. Fanning was not near

enough to hear her remarks, but she saw and heard the laughter, and though she admitted that there was just cause for merriment, she by no means approved that her niece should be so prominent a promoter of the fun. She laughed herself, quietly, and she would have had Harry laugh less conspicuously.

She had another cause for displeasure in the headdress Harry wore. She had not seen her since her evening toilette was made, and she was puzzled to know what it was she wore in her hair. It was very pretty, certainly; and very novel, and very becoming, and very graceful, encircling her head in one slender wreath, and hanging in festoons over her comb. In short, it was everything that was admirable until Mrs. Fanning discovered what it really was.

She was both amused and provoked with her discovery, and at once determined that Miss Harry should receive another lecture that very night. But they danced so late the lecture was per force postponed until the next morning.

Now the next morning, Harry had breakfasted before her aunt made her appearance, and was strolling about the grounds with Mr. Dunbar. Mrs. Fauning could not await her return, and she sent Phebe in search of her, with the message that she was not very well, and wished to see her immediately.

"What is the matter, Aunt Eleanor?" said Harry, as she entered her aunt's room. She well knew a lecture awaited her.

"I have a slight headache, my dear." Mrs. Fanning held a fan and cologne-bottle; she was not sick at all, but she thought it best to appear so, as she had sent Harry a message to that effect. "But what I have to say can not be put off. Harriet, I hardly know what to say to you about your behavior last night."

"My behavior, Aunt Eleanor? what behavior, ma'am?" said Harry, demurely.

"Come, come Harry, you cannot look innocent; that will not pass with me. You know very well what I mean; you cannot deny that you laughed at Mr. Dunbar last night."

"Laughed, ma'am? Indeed, I liked to have died! And who could help it? I have been wanting ever since to practise those steps; I do believe I could do them as well as Mr. Dunbar, and this is as good a time as any." And gath-

ering up her voluminous skirts, she sprang into the middle of the floor, and executed some of that gentleman's flourishes so exactly that Mrs. Fanning laughed in spite of herself.

"There, Auntie! do not you see how impossible it is to keep from laughing?"

"All this does very well, Harry, in private, but what I find fault with, is your laughing so publicly."

"Everybody laughed."

"Yes, but you need not have laughed so conspicuously. However, this is but a small part of what I had to say. Your conscience must accuse you, Harry, when you remember the flowers you wore last night."

"How, Aunt? bachelor's buttons? they always were my most favorite flowers."

"That may be; but I must say that your wearing them for the first time on the night of Mr. Dunbar's arrival, has a very suspicious look. I cannot help believing that you had some design in it. I am ignorant of the language of flowers, and cannot say what the emblem of bachelor's buttons may be, but I do hope and trust that Mr. Dunbar did not observe them; he could not help thinking that more was meant than met the eye. I had occasion several days ago, to give you my views about flirting; it is true that what I then said had reference, more particularly to your friend Mr. Thorne, but it is equally applicable to all cases."

"Indeed, Auntie, I am not going to flirt with Mr. Dunbar; my tactics would be thrown away on him, he does not understand the art."

"*Art! Tactics!* Harriet never let me hear you use such language again."

"No ma'am; but Auntie, just let me explain myself. Mr. Dunbar *will* hang around me, and if I do not have some fun out of him, he will bore me to death."

"Very well, my dear, it is better to be bored to death, than to be talked about as a flirt."

"He has no heart to break," said Harry.

"Very probably not; it would make but little difference if he had. It is not Mr. Dunbar I am thinking of, but you. I want you to understand me, once for all, Harry, you *must* not flirt with Mr. Dunbar. He is a perfectly respectable person, and therefore his attentions, within proper bounds, can do you no harm. He rather lacks polish, it is true, but



that is no reason why you should lead the world to think that you care for him particularly."

"Auntie!" exclaimed Harry, suddenly, "I will make a bargain with you, a fair, and even, and honest bargain. I will not flirt with Mr. Dunbar, if you will go this evening to call on my beautiful stranger."

"I cannot see any necessity for that, Harry. We do not know who they are, and if the borrowed articles are safely returned with thanks, and all that, it will be sufficient; they will not expect more of us."

"Oh! but Auntie, I have such a great curiosity about her—"

"What is that? What is that?" cried Mrs. Dean, and Miss Sallie Hart, knocking at the open door. "Curiosity about whom?"

"Nothing," said Mrs. Fanning, laughing, "only Harry is teasing to have me call on her beautiful stranger, as she calls that Unknown at Sammons'."

"Oh, dear! If that is the case," exclaimed Miss Sallie, "you had as well say yes at once, for when Harry gets on one of her romantic mysteries, she never knows when to stop."

"I tell Harry that we do not know who they are, and that it is quite sufficient to send back the clothes, with a message of thanks."

"Of course it is," said Mrs. Dean, who always agreed with Mrs. Fanning.

"There now, Harry," said her aunt, "you see Mrs. Dean thinks so."

Harry was silent; Mrs. Dean's opinion never had any weight with her.

"Let me suggest a plan, Harry," said Miss Hart. "Let Phebe take the things first; she is a discreet damsel, not likely to be carried away by enthusiasm as you are. She can bring a report, and then we can decide if it is proper to go."

"Very well," said Harry, anxious to change the subject, for she by no means desired to have Mrs. Dean and Miss Hart go with her. But she had not abandoned the hope of accomplishing the visit.

Phebe carried the clothes that afternoon, but returned no wiser than she went. Mrs. Sammons was not at home, and she could not see the young lady.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## MR. DUNBAR'S PANACEA.



WHETHER Mr. Dunbar did observe the bachelor's buttons and was encouraged thereby, or whether he had determined beforehand to act upon the proverb about faint hearts and fair ladies, he devoted himself assiduously to Harry. That young lady, anxious to propitiate her aunt, behaved with great propriety, but the other young people continued to laugh at him without mercy.

Mr. Brittain had taken a great fancy to that corner of the piazza most frequented by the young people, and there he sat one morning with his book upside down, when then there arose between the belles and beaux an animated discourse on beauty. Harry immediately began to praise the stranger at Mr. Sammons's.

"Do you know, now, Miss Harry," said Mr. Sutton, "Paul and I went over there, but it was no go; Beauty was invisible. I am strongly inclined to think you are hoaxing us about that."

"Indeed," said Harry, "no such a thing. I did see the most beautiful creature," —

"Then you must have looked in the glass," said Mr. Dunbar, intending thereby to be very agreeable.

Harry turned away with a little impatient movement. "I hope you learned her name, Mr. Sutton?" asked she.

"Name? No, by Jove! I forgot to ask."

"You stupid creature," said Harry.

"Oh! Mr. Sutton," cried Miss Hart, "you are in for some sound abuse; Harry will never forgive you for not inviting her to go with you. 'Auntie' will not go, and 'Niecy' will not listen to 'Auntie's' reasons, though they are wisdom's own. Mrs. Fanning cannot listen with any

patience to Harry's romantic nonsense about this mysterious damsel ; but she might as well indulge her whim, for Harry will never give it up until she does ; any of her old schoolmates can answer for that. I remember well how she used to carry on over every new scholar, particularly if the new scholar happened to be a little homesick or reserved. And then Mile. Celeste ! oh ! she was somebody, she had some romantic history, Harry was sure."

"Well !" said Harry, who had listened rather impatiently to this tirade. "Well," and so she had, she told me part of her history in confidence, and as she is dead now — poor thing, — I do not think it wrong to say that she told me her father was a Marquis."

This was received with a general shout.

"La ! Harry, my child you are green," said Miss Hart. "Do you not know that a marquis is one of the easiest inventions in the world ?"

Harry colored furiously. "I do not think it was an invention," said she with much warmth ; "I am sure it was so."

"My dearest child !" cried Miss Hart, with a burst of laughter, "your organ of credulity must be perfectly enormous. Mr. Paul, you understand phrenology, do examine her head."

Mr. Paul advanced and raised his hand to Harry's head, but something in her looks deterred him. His hand fell powerless.

"Impertinent !" thought Mr. Brittain, who, unsuspected, was a quiet observer of this scene.

"Well, Harry," said Miss Hart, "he shan't touch your head, child ; go on with the Marquis, it is very interesting. What else did Celeste tell you ?"

"It is no use telling you, Sallie, you won't believe it, and I am not going to countenance you in making the dead ridiculous."

"Oh ! my goodness ! no, to be sure ! Old Celeste's ghost might get after us ! But the living, you know ; old Rache Porter had her romance of course, Harry, and you were always closeted with her. You must be able to tell us something about her. What was Rache's father, Harry."

"Sallie, I wish you would not call her that," said Harry.

"Call her what, child ? Is not that her name ? Or perhaps she was a disguised Marchioness, or a Duchess ? Do tell me, and I will call her, 'Her Grace.'"

"If I knew I would not tell you a word!" said Harry, angrily. "I particularly hate to be laughed at in this way, and you know it, and I want this to be the last time."

"Oh! goodness! run, run!" cried Miss Hart. "Whenever you see Harry turn white around her lips, you may know she will bite."

Harry laughed. "No," she said, "I will not bite this time, but I am really angry, Sallie."

"Then, my dear," said Miss Sallie, making a courtsey, "I will leave you to recover your equilibrium, I do not like angry people. Come, who is for a swing?"

Harry turned her chair round, and began arranging some grasses she had stuck in her hat.

"Won't you go to the swing, Miss Harry," said Mr. Dunbar, "I won't swing anybody but you, and I've a very strong arm."

"Thank you," said Harry, "but you see my company is not desired in my present frame of mind, and I am not prepared to say that I have recovered my temper."

"Miss Hart is too impertinent; I suppose she is envious of your beauty."

"This is the second time, to day Mr. Dunbar," said Harry, with such vehemence that she startled not only Mr. Dunbar, but Mr. Brittain also, "that you have persisted in telling me about my beauty. I know I am beautiful, so do not keep harping on it."

"Oh! certainly, certainly," said poor Mr. Dunbar, "I had no idea that it was disagreeable to you. Won't you let me fan you?" trying to take her hat.

"No, you will put it out of shape," said she, holding on to it.

There was a little pause, during which Harry began to repent. Presently Mr. Dunbar said,

"Miss Harry, old Jake has got some splendid water-melons, he only asks seventy-five cents. S'pose I get one, we can eat it by ourselves, we needn't ask the others."

Harry hardly knew whether to laugh or cry, but she consented that he should go for the water-melon, in order to be rid of him. As soon as he was gone she was about to rise, when Mr. Brittain, seating himself on the bench beside her, said, —

"Miss Vane, if you will not consider me impertinent, I should like very much to know who is your Mrs. Porter."

Harry felt half inclined to think that he too had been laughing at her.

"I did not think," said she, "that you heard any of that conversation."

"I could not very well help hearing it."

"You could have gone away."

"I could have gone away, it is true," said Mr. Brittain, but — but" —

"But — you didn't!" said Harry, laughing pleasantly. "That is what I used to say at school. I am very sorry you did not, though, because you saw me make a beautiful exhibition of myself. I cannot help getting angry when I am laughed at in that way."

"You had sufficient provocation."

"No, I do not think I had. Sallie has more sense than I; she knows the world so well. She is always laughing at my credulity, but instead of curing me, it puts me in a passion. I like to believe that Mlle. Celeste was the daughter of a Marquis, and lived in such a magnificent old chateau, and that Mrs. Porter watched over a crazy sister for years before she would let her go to the Asylum. She went crazy from a broken heart, poor thing."

Mr. Brittain smiled. "I know nothing about Mlle. Celeste," said he, "but I do know that all you say of Mrs. Porter is true. Her husband was my tutor, and I distinctly remember poor Agnes; she was a very mild and gentle sort of maniac."

"Do you know her history?" said Harry, eagerly.

"Yes" — said Mr. Brittain, hesitating, "but," —

"Do not tell me!" said Harry, "do not tell me! I should like very much to know it, but Mrs. Porter refused to tell me; she said it would do no good, and I do not think she wished me to know it."

Mr. Brittain was charmed. "Then you shall tell me about Mrs. Porter," said he; "I have lost sight of her for many years."

"Oh! is she not a good woman?" said Harry. "She did not come to Mme. Camballat's until two years ago. I think if she had always been there I should have been a better girl. I am going to have her with me as soon as I get home, that is, if I can find out where she is. Sallie Hart says she has gone as a governess somewhere, but she does not remember where."

"Miss Hart was not so fond of her as you?"

"No, Sallie did not like her."

Mr. Brittain felt an irresistible desire to ask questions, that he could not deny were rather unbecoming.

"You do not seem to have many tastes in common?"

"Not many," said Harry,

"Is she what is called a—flirt?"

Harry looked at him keenly, so keenly that he colored.

"I wonder," she thought "if he has a fancy for Sallie?"

"No," she said aloud, "I do not think she is a flirt."

There was silence for a few moments, and Harry exclaimed, half crying,

"I declare, that horrid old blue-jacket has bought a water-melon! I wonder if he really means me to eat half? I wish he would stump his toe and break it, tiresome old thing!"

"I thought," said Mr. Brittain, "you liked him."

"You did not! you could not! He is only good to be laughed at, and Aunt Eleanor has forbidden me to laugh at him."

"You would laugh at him then, if you were not forbidden?"

"Yes, I would," said Harry, promptly.

"Do you laugh at all your admirers Miss Vane?"

"I do not know," said she, thinking he meant to read her one of her aunt's lectures. "It does no harm."

Mr. Brittain smiled, but said no more, for Mr. Dunbar now toiled up to them with his water-melon. "It is dearer than I thought," said he, depositing it upon the bench. "A dollar, but it is a fine one. Miss Harry, shall I order some plates?"

"Yes, said Harry: "half a dozen, and some knives and forks. Mr. Brittain is going to join us, and you must send for the others."

"But, Miss Harry, — I bought it for you?"

"But I will not be little Jack Horner," said Harry, impatiently. "Send for the others."

But I don't choose. It is my water-melon."

"Very well, neither do I choose," said Harry, and she walked away. Mr. Dunbar stood staring with his mouth open until she descended the steps.

"Really!" said he, turning to Mr. Brittain "a most extraordinary girl!" Mr. Brittain thought so too, but said

nothing. Mr. Dunbar, seating himself astride the bench and rolling the water-melon backwards and forwards, began again, — "Do you know, Professor, I think she likes me, I really think she does. I think she would say 'yes' in a minute. It would be no such bad thing for me either, she is a right down pretty girl, and a right down pretty fortune into the bargain. Do you know what she may be worth?"

"I have not the slightest idea," said Mr. Brittain, coldly.

"It is unaccountable, her walking off in that way," continued Mr. Dunbar, thumping the melon. "I should not think she would feel complimented to be asked to share it with a crowd? Any how she has missed a treat; suppose we eat it? It is too good to go a begging."

Mr. Brittain declined, and Mr. Dunbar picked up his scorned melon and laid it at Miss Hart's feet. Her gracious acceptance was so soothing that for several days he devoted himself exclusively to her, and quite neglected Harry.

There came a rainy day, when the pleasure-seekers could not visit the ten-pin alley, and in order to kill time they placed the card-tables on the piazza, and sat themselves down to play. The rain was not hard enough to drive them into the house, and beside the card-players there were gentlemen with their papers, and ladies with their fancy-work; among the latter was Mrs. Brittain, seated near her son, who was teaching a gay young lady the moves of chess.

As the tables and cards were brought out, the young ladies and gentlemen grouped around them, and each one had found a seat and a partner except Harry.

"Oh! Harry, are you not going to play?" said one.

"Come join us," said another.

"You can take my place," said a third, — "I do not understand the game."

"What are you doing?" cried Miss Hart, "Harry hardly knows an ace from a queen; we are much better off without her."

"Thank you!" said Harry, laughing, "I am going to learn something more useful than the names of cards."

"Ah! me," thought Mrs. Brittain, "chess, I suppose!"

"Miss Susan if I get my needles will you show me how to knit that scarf now?"

Miss Susan was delighted. She had long been wanting to teach Harry some of her accomplishments, and when the ivory needles were brought, and the bright scarlet wool,

she laid aside her embroidery very cheerfully to set up the scarf.

There was a busy silence for some time; the card-players and the chess-players were absorbed in their games, and Harry was interested in her knitting. Presently Mr. Brittain, in raising his arm to make a move, struck one of his chessmen off the table. It rolled away under the bench where Dr. Innibee was sitting, with his back to the rest reading a paper, and as it rolled Harry saw it.

"Oh! catch it! catch it!" cried she, throwing down her knitting, "do not let it run out in the rain!" And she stretched her hand under the bench to stop the pawn.

Dr. Innibee, startled by her exclamation, turned quickly, and the rickety old bench which had long been threatening to give way, could not resist the violent wrench produced by his sudden movement; down it came, and the Doctor with it, on Harry's hand. She uttered a little scream. More quickly than he had moved for many a long day, the Doctor sprang up and raised the bench, and Harry bowed herself over her hand, rocking backwards and forwards for a moment, and then sitting perfectly still.

As soon as the bench fell, and Harry's scream was heard, every one abandoned their amusement, and crowded around. Every one except Mrs. Brittain; she was convinced that it was only a ruse. Not so Mr. Brittain; he had seen the bench come down on her hand, and moreover, she was suffering in his service. He started at the fall of the bench, as if he had been shot, upset his table, and scattered the chessmen in every direction, to the infinite disgust of Mrs. Daniels, and as he came up some one said "Oh! she has fainted!"

Mr. Dunbar immediately pushed his way unceremoniously through the crowd, and rushed off, crying, "Water! water! water!!" as though the house were on fire.

"No, I have not fainted," said Harry in a voice that showed she had made a narrow escape of it.

Kind Miss Susan Innibee kneeled down by her, and putting her arm around her said,

"Here Harry, smell this aromatic vinegar, it is excellent; far better than any you can buy; I made it myself."

As Harry had but one hand, and Miss Susan had too, she could not avoid smelling the aromatic vinegar which was held immediately under her nose.

"Let me see your hand, Harry," said Doctor Innibee.



"You will have to sue me or the carpenter who made that bench. Pr-e-t-t-y badly bruised, but I believe there are no bones broken. Bathe it in some cold water."

By this time Mr. Dunbar had returned with a very rusty tin basin full of water, and was just going to throw it upon Harry, when Mr. Brittain, holding his arm, told him that Miss Vane had not fainted.

"That is the very thing!" said Dr. Innibee. "Hand that basin here, Sylvester."

Mr. Dunbar peeped over, and taking one look at Harry's bruised hand exclaimed, "Turpentine's the thing!" and rushed off again.

Dr. Innibee placed Harry's hand in the basin of water, and Miss Susan was bathing it very tenderly, when Mr. Dunbar pushed his way up to her, with a bottle of spirits of turpentine.

"What are they doing?" cried he. "Miss Harry you must not use cold water, there is no use in that, it will do no good. If I had been here, they should not have imposed on you so; take this turpentine, I went on purpose to get it for you."

"Thank you," said Harry, faintly, "you are very kind, but the water is doing me good."

"Oh! that is impossible!" said Mr. Dunbar. "The only thing for a bruise is a poultice of turpentine and earth-worms; Miss Harry do try it!"

"Thank you;" said Harry again, with a slight shudder, "Dr. Innibee thinks cold water the best thing for me."

"But Doctors don't know everything. I tell you the best thing in the world for a bruise is a poultice of turpentine and earth-worms; I've seen it tried hundreds of times. Cold water is really injurious. Miss Harry just put this turpentine on it now, and then have a poultice made by boiling the worms and mashing them up warm with turpentine: you'll be astonished what relief it will give you."

"No," said Harry, impatiently, "I like cold water better."

"But cold water is really injurious, just let me put this turpentine on, and my boy Dick can dig you the worms and make you the poultice immediately, he understands all about it. Miss Harry, I beg, I entreat, I *insist* upon your taking your hand out of that water," and Mr. Dunbar made as if he would take away the basin.

Mr. Brittain and some of the others had begun to think that Harry would fall a victim to his pertinacity, but no sooner had he touched the basin, than she seized it with her other hand, and with an energy which startled all her hearers, and threw Dr. Innibee into convulsions of laughter, she exclaimed,

“Do, for goodness' sake, let me alone! You worry me to death! It is my hand, and my mash, and my pain, and it is nothing to you if I choose to hurt it with cold water!”

Mr. Sutton clapped his hands and cried “*Brava!*” as he would have applauded an actress on the stage.

Mrs. Brittain, who had drawn near when she found that Harry really was hurt, recoiled at this speech, and decided that she was a “*tartar.*”

Mr. Dunbar stood with his bottle in one hand and gesticulated with the other, while he expatiated upon the virtues of turpentine and earth-worms. “Why, I never use any thing else on my plantation. It is the very best remedy under the sun, and the simplest thing in the world.”

“Ill news flies fast,” says the proverb, and Mrs. Fanning having heard that her niece had met with a severe accident, hurried up to the Hotel, pale with apprehension. The first person she encountered was Mr. Brittain; he had been down the steps to find the unfortunate chessman which had been the cause of Harry's accident.

“Oh! Mr. Brittain!” said Mrs. Fanning, “what is the matter? Is Harry hurt much?”

“Her hand is very badly bruised, madam, but I believe there are no bones broken. I regret to add that she met with this accident in my service, she was trying to save my chessman.”

They had reached the group still clustered on the piazza, in time for Mrs. Brittain to hear this closing remark, and she immediately added,

“There was no necessity in the world for her doing it.”

“Of course not,” said Mrs. Fanning, kneeling down by her niece, “Harry you are too impetuous. My dear child, how did you contrive to get such a hurt?”

Miss Susan explained the accident.

“I wonder it had not killed you, you poor child!” said Mrs. Fanning. “Doctor do you think it seriously injured?”

“I hope not, madam; keep a wet cloth on it.”

"No, Mrs. Fanning," said Mr. Dunbar, "take my advice, I have had experience. Cold water is injurious. A poultice of earth-worms and turpentine is the thing for a bruise."

"You are very kind sir," said Mrs. Fanning politely, "but I think I will take her to her room, before applying anything further. Come, Harry, come with me."

Harry rose, but Mr. Dunbar planted himself directly in their path, and said to Mrs. Fanning,

"But, my dear madam, delays are dangerous; you can not be too prompt in applying this remedy, and I can assure you that a poultice of" —

"Aunt Eleanor!" said Harry, "I will not put that stuff on my hand, and I told you so once before, Mr. Dunbar. Go away!"

"Gently, gently, my love!" said Mrs. Fanning. "Mr. Dunbar, you must excuse her, pain you know, is apt to make one savage." And having softened her niece's rebuff, she led her away.

"By Jove! she is game!" said Mr. Sutton. "Dunbar, if you marry her, the way she will lead you by the nose!"

"But, she is so unreasonable!" said Mr. Dunbar.

"And so shockingly rude!" said Miss Grace.

"Harry always would bite your head off, if you bothered her," said Miss Hart.

"I admire her spirit!" said the Doctor.

"Of course you do, she defended your practice!" said Mrs. Daniels.

"Yes, and another gentleman I could name admires her spirit!" said the Doctor, nodding his head at Mr. Brittain.

"Doctor Innibee grows silly as he grows older," said Mrs. Brittain to her son.

Mr. Brittain made no reply, for he could not contradict the Doctor's assertions. He did indeed admire Harry's spirit, though he thought it was manifested in a rather startling manner. He had trembled for her when the pertinacious Mr. Dunbar insisted so strenuously upon the use of his poultice, and he was just on the point of interfering himself, when she gave such unexpected evidence of being able to protect herself.

Poor Mr. Dunbar! he was more hurt by the rejection of his favorite remedy than by the roughness of Harry's speech. He recited to every one who would listen, the

speedy cures he had seen performed by this remarkable poultice, and finally he went to insist upon Mrs. Fanning giving it a trial.

Mrs. Fanning was no more inclined to favor the abominable compound than was her niece, but she was more gentle and gracious in refusing it. And though Mr. Dunbar only came to urge the immediate application of turpentine and earth-worms, he was so flattered by her manner, that he stayed to give some good advice for Miss Harry's benefit.

"Since we have been discussing Miss Harry's unreasonableness, madam, I'll just make bold to acquaint you with one of her extravagant projects, of which I was informed by Mr. Kennett, a very unsafe person, to my taking, for a young girl like Miss Harry to be thrown with, for he is so likely to encourage every thing out of the way. Indeed to my certain knowledge, he did encourage her in this most unaccountable freak."

"Pray, what freak?" asked Mrs. Fanning, in a fever of impatience.

"Why ma'am, you see I know it is true, for he told me of it in her presence, and she did not deny it."

"Told what?"

"Why ma'am, that she intends going on the stage, yes ma'am, only think of it! Actually going on the stage as a dancer or a singer!"

"Oh! she was not in earnest about that," said Mrs. Fanning, intensely relieved.

"Indeed ma'am she was, for when I remonstrated with her, she told me she intended to study a year first."

"Well!" thought Mrs. Fanning, "this accounts for Mr. Kennett's absence! How could Harry be so silly? Just like one of her pranks."

"You see, ma'am," continued Mr. Dunbar, "I consider it a solemn duty to warn you of this—this theatrical propensity."

"Thank you, Mr. Dunbar, I shall profit by it; but you must allow me to assure you that I do not think Miss Vane entertains any idea of taking such a step."

"I trust not ma'am, I sincerely trust not, indeed I hope she'll soon settle down and become truly domestic."

Mrs. Fanning thought there was a remote prospect of such a 'settling down.' As to the stage business, she knew very well that Harry never could have seriously en-

tertained such a project, but that she had said so, and said so with all the appearance of being in earnest, she could not doubt. She was sure now that she had discovered the secret cause of Mr. Kennett's absence. "He is such a fastidious person," said she to herself. "A speech like that, uttered in the way that only Harry Vane can utter such a speech, is the very thing to frighten him off. How absurd in Harry! That accounts for his absence, for Mr. Kennett is not the man to be scared away by a boy like Henry Thorne."

But, as this speech about going on the stage could hardly prove her niece guilty of flirting with Mr. Kennett, Mrs. Fanning decided not to read her a lecture, only to question and find out how, when, and where such a speech had been made.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### THE MINIATURE-CASE.



ARRY'S hurt rendered her quite helpless for the first few days after the accident, so that Mrs. Fanning, anxious to amuse her, proposed a visit to the stranger, at Mr. Sammons's.

"But, my dear, you must remember," said her aunt, as Harry was expressing her extravagant delight, "I do not go because I think it incumbent to do so. You are never to quote this upon any future occasion as a precedent. I am only going to amuse you."

"Oh no, auntie, I never shall tease you about it. But, oh, I am so glad you are going!"

Little change had passed over the mansion of the Sammonses since Harry chanced there in the rain; the same heavily-blocked gate, the same poplar-trees, the same old hounds coursing about the yard, and Mrs. Sammons, huge as ever, standing in the door. The good woman was much astonished to see these fashionably dressed ladies alight

from the crazy little hack wherewith the denizens of Myrtle Springs were forced to be content, but she recognized Harry at once, and greeted her heartily. Harry introduced her aunt, and then inquired for Miss Marcia.

"Who? Miss Marsh? La! miss, they's been gone this week or more."

Harry's countenance fell. "Gone?" she cried, in dismay, "Where?"

"La! that's more'n I can tell!" said Mrs. Sammons, laughing. "A more close-mouth set I never see."

"But did they say nothing about themselves? Did they never discuss their journey before you, nor say whence they came, nor once mention their name?" asked Harry, eagerly.

"Name? Oh! to be sure; they had one servant, a Irisher, along with them, and he always waited on the old gentleman. He called him 'the master,' and the young lady he called 'Miss Marsh,' and hisself he called a 'vally,' and talked mighty big about the master being a grand man. He was a mighty puny lookin' little man, I thought, and wondrous queer. I s'pose he's some furriner; Miss Marsh had lots o' furrin books, and they usened to speak something that warn't English, sometimes. They comed here in pretty much such a soak as you dropped down in. The ole man was sick, and tuk his bed, and there he stayed till a little while afore he left. They kep' mightily to theyselves, but they paid us handsome. I heard the young lady say, one day, to the old man, 'Let's go home.' It seems they had been talking 'bout going, and didn't 'zactly know which road to travel, I s'pose. And the ole man sez, sez he, 'I've got no home.' Then sez she, 'Oh yes; you can make a home out of the old place. This wandering life is a wearin' you out.' I suspicions he is a travelling showman. He had a monstrous sight of queeriosities in his room; stuffed birds, and snakes in cages, and sich like. And that Michael Strout, that 'vally' didn't do nothing but walk about the woods an' ketch lizards an' spiders, an' sich varmint, though what for they should want to show them things that can be seed in the woods any day, I can't make out."

"Well, Harry," said Mrs. Fanning, rising, "we will not trespass longer upon Mrs. Sammons' time. My niece" continued she to Mrs. Sammons, "was anxious to return her thanks to — Miss Marsh — and yourself. We are sorry not to have seen the young lady."

"La! ma'am, you are freely welcome; but I don't s'pose you'd have seed 'em if they was here. Two gents from the Springs comed over one day, and I went up and begged and prayed her to come down, for one on 'em so frustrated me with his sassiness I was wonderful put to it to keep my manners. I suppose he knowed her by her show-name, for he kep' a calling her *Mamselle L'Inconnue*."

Mrs. Fanning smiled, while Harry mentally anathematized Mr. Sutton for his impertinence.

"Auntie!" she cried, as soon as the hack drove off with them, "I do not believe it! I will not believe it. Marcia was the name in her books and on her clothes; she must have some other name. I will never believe they are any travelling show-people."

"Really, Harry; what sudden objection can you have to that calling? I thought you entertained a serious idea of going on the stage yourself?"

"Madam, I?" said Harry, in amazement.

"Yes, you. Did you not tell Mr. Kennett that you were going on the stage, if you could decide whether it should be as a singer or a dancer?"

"I have not the slightest recollection of ever saying anything of the kind."

"Why, Harry! Mr. Dunbar told me that Mr. Kennett told him you said so. Mr. Kennett spoke of it in your presence."

"Oh! yes; at the picnic. But that was some of Mr. Kennett's own invention. I always told you, auntie, that he was officious and impertinent."

"But, my dear, Mr. Dunbar told me you said you intended studying a year preparatory to making your debüt."

"Well, I did say so, and he believed it, like an old goose as he is! How can one resist the temptation to impose on such credulity?"

"Ah! Harry! Harry! Take care, my child. I fear this temptation, if indulged in, may lead to a flirtation."

"Indeed, I am not flirting with him. I am tired to death of him. You know I told you if you would come with me on this visit I would not flirt with him, and you must acknowledge I have kept my word."

"Yes, my dear, I do acknowledge it. I have been very much gratified to see that you are disposed to profit by my reproofs. It is true you might have refused the gentle-

man's earth-worms in a less obstreperous manner, but considering the circumstances, I suppose you are excusable. I do not despair of curing you of all your follies, even of this unaccountable one of hunting up mysteries. I am very glad, however, that we went to see Mrs. Sammons, because what we have heard will, I hope, convince you of the truth of my maxim, that one should never be too eager to seek strangers, unless one has good reason to know they are worth seeking."

"Aunt Eleanor, you surely do not believe that foolish story about a travelling showman?"

"No, my dear; I neither believe nor disbelieve. I only know that we are no wiser than we were before, and I consider it best to refrain from all mention of, or allusion to, this visit."

"Yes, ma'am," said Harry, dutifully, glad to think that Sallie Hart would never hear of it.

The bruised hand improved but slowly, and Harry found time hang most heavily. As she sat wearily watching the dancers one evening, Mr. Brittain, who happened to be on the piazza near the window where she was seated, was much surprised to hear her express a wish for something to read. Immediately he determined to place at her disposal all the books he had with him. He had thought it a great pity Miss Vane cared so little for reading, but this unfortunate accident, he hoped, might induce her to devote a little time to the improvement of her mind. As soon as she was left alone he looked in at the window and accosted her. With a little start she returned his salutation. She was looking very languid, but very pretty; prettier than ever, Mr. Brittain thought.

"How do you do, this evening?"

"Oh! I am very well," she said, with a weary little sigh.

"You are not dancing to-night; how do you amuse yourself?"

"I do not amuse myself at all," said Harry, with impatience. "I am having a stupid time."

"Perhaps I could amuse you," said Mr. Brittain, hesitatingly.

"Oh, thank you!" said Harry, much surprised. "But how? I am afraid you would find it too great a condescension to take the trouble to amuse me. Why, how could



you amuse me?" she continued, puzzled somewhat, and not a little curious; "you would not teach me chess?"

"If you would like to learn," said Mr. Brittain, who had not once thought of chess.

"Oh! no," said Harry, in alarm; "I do not like chess."

"You certainly have cause to dislike it," said Mr. Brittain; "but I was not thinking of chess. I heard you wishing for something to read; I have a few books with me entirely at your service."

"You are very kind," said she, warmly. "But," she added, after a pause, "I am afraid I could not read your books."

"Oh, yes! why not?"

"A Professor, you know."

"And why may you not read a book that a Professor would read?"

"I could not understand it, perhaps."

"I think you could understand and enjoy many that I have. I can send you some you would like; I can even send you some novels; young ladies generally like novels; do you like them?"

"Yes, if they are not too long, and do not end unhappily."

"And if you like poetry I can lend you some poems."

"I do not know if I like it or not," said Harry. "What one may call funny poetry, you know, tires me; and this grand kind of poetry makes me feel shivery and unearthly, and insignificant, and I do not like to feel that way."

Mr. Brittain smiled. If he was not amusing Harry, she certainly was amusing him. "If you do not like poetry, I have travels, biographies, history; I certainly can find something to please you."

"Do you never get tired of books?" said Harry.

"No; I could not live without them."

"I wonder," said Harry, suddenly, "what sort of life one would lead in a house with a Professor!"

How Mr. Brittain's heart jumped! and then stood still, with the painful certainty conveyed in her tone that she did not think it could be very pleasant. "This is very foolish in me," he thought, and then he said aloud, "You think it would be dull, Miss Vane?"

"Well, yes," said Harry, frankly, "I think it would; but then, no duller than a ball-room to you, I once heard you say that dance music made you feel dull."

"For which I dare say you thought me stupid."

"No, not exactly; I thought no worse of you for that than you think of me for not liking poetry."

"But I do not think badly of you for not liking poetry. I only think you miss a great deal of enjoyment by not liking books."

"Ah! and you miss so much by not liking dancing."

He smiled. "Suppose one cannot dance," he said.

"Yes, I see," said Harry. "You mean me to read one of your books; what is it?"

"Nay; you were wishing for a book," he said.

"Yes; and I do not want to read to improve myself; I want to amuse myself."

"Do you ever read a book twice?" he asked.

"No. Why should I?"

"Then it is useless to offer you the 'Lady of the Lake;' of course you have read it?"

Harry shook her little empty head.

"You never did?" said Mr. Brittain, surprised. "It is poetry, it is true, but I think you would like it."

"Well!" said Harry, with sudden resolution, "I will read it, but I really think I would rather have the book of travels."

"You shall have both," said Mr. Brittain, gravely; and then the dancers returning to their seats, he talked no more with Harry.

"What has that Professor been lecturing you about?" said Mr. Sutton.

"Why do you wish to know?" said Harry.

"Because you appeared to be wonderfully interested, and I did not think you could be so in anything he had to say."

"Then you see you were mistaken."

"The Professor can be very interesting at times," said Mr. Paul.

"And very prosy, too," said Mr. Sutton; who, being out of sight of Mr. Brittain, thought he was also out of hearing.

"At least," said Harry, "he is never rude, and I have never found him prosy." Then she added in a lower tone, "he can hear you."

"Let him go away, then!" said Mr. Sutton. "Eavesdroppers" —

Harry turned away a little uncomfortable, and tried to talk to Mr. Brittain, to Mr. Sutton's infinite disgust, who

thought himself in every respect superior to the sober Professor.

As to the Professor, he was in a dream. What ambitious hopes he was founding on that promise to read the "Lady of the Lake," as though that romantic poem would prove the certain prelude to a laborious course of study! Not that he would have Miss Vane become learned, but he did very much wish to see her attach some value to intellectual wealth; a selfish wish, perhaps, could he have faithfully analyzed it.

And Miss Vane, all the while revering this man's wealth of intellect, found it a rather difficult undertaking deliberately to begin a conversation with him. Nevertheless, though she hesitated and contradicted herself again and again, he thought her well worth listening to, and was both surprised and sorry when her aunt came to take her away. He sent the books the next morning, and wished sincerely he might have something to send every morning, Miss Vane so well understood the graceful art of expressing thanks.

As he would not acknowledge that he was in love with this ignorant young lady, of course he could see no necessity for keeping out of her way, and poor Mrs. Brittain passed many miserable hours. Poor old lady! her summers at the Springs were never seasons of unalloyed bliss; for there are always young ladies at watering-places, and where there are young ladies, there is also danger. The degree of interest her gifted son manifested for the silly nonsense of the young and gay this summer, was really alarming. He was always on the hotel piazza, and thither followed his uneasy mother. And so it came to pass that mother and son were present one morning when the young people were talking nonsense, as usual. Several of the girls had made up a party the evening before to go on a shopping expedition to a country store, about half a mile distant. Accordingly they appeared in walking costume, and as it was a damp and chilly morning, Miss Harry Vane and one or two beside, chose to wear their travelling-dresses. Now Miss Harry Vane's travelling-dress had very shallow pockets.

"Good morning, Harry, my dear!" said Miss Hart; "how is your hand?"

"Good morning, Miss Harry," cried Mr. Sutton. "How are your 'mash,' and your 'hand,' and your 'pain' to-day?"

"My hand is getting well fast; so fast that I shall soon have forgotten all about it; therefore it is time that my rude speech should be forgotten also; pray say nothing to perpetuate it?"

"If you order it to be forgotten you must be obeyed," said Mr. Sutton, gallantly.

"But I can tell you, Harry," said Miss Hart, "Mr. Dunbar will not forget; you have made him your irreconcilable enemy."

"Oh, yes, indeed!" cried Miss Grace, "he has taken his *parti*; he told us good by last night, and he left early this morning."

"Is he really gone?" said Harry.

"Gone, my dear; absolutely gone, without a word of adieu," said Miss Grace. "And it is not easy to say if you can again subject him to your *règle*, he is" —

"Harry, how I pity you, child; I wonder you are not in mourning, such a dreadful loss, you know," said Miss Hart.

"Mourning?" repeated Mr. Paul. "Ah! so unbecoming to one of Miss Harry's sprightly disposition. Now, I should suggest green, which signifies forsaken. What a capital subject for some lines, 'The Departure of the Rejected.' I think I shall write them."

"Green, did you advise, Mr. Paul?" said Harry. "I will adopt your suggestion; green is at least easy to procure. I will wear a sprig of *arbor-vitæ* in my hat, or my hair, for the rest of the day, by way of penance for my naughty, rude speech." And she ran down the piazza as far as the steps, near which there grew an *arbor-vitæ* bush. She had not entirely recovered the use of her hand, and in reaching up after a twig, as she stood on the steps, she lost her balance, and failing to catch herself, she slipped to the ground.

Mr. Brittain instantly jumped off the piazza and ran to the rescue, while his mother sat thinking to herself, "Artful girl! just like her! That is all put on now to attract sympathy."

But Harry had sprung to her feet, and was brushing the dirt from her dress when Mr. Brittain reached her.

"Are you hurt, Miss Vane?"

"No sir; not at all," said she, laughing, and looking diligently about on the ground.

"Have you lost something?" He had hardly asked the

question before he found an answer, for, lying on the ground almost at his feet, was a miniature-case, which had been thrown open by the shock of the fall, so that its satin lining, yellow with age, and full of moth-holes, was fully exposed to view. It did not need a second glance to convince him that it belonged to the very miniature he had shown her at Bennet's Pool; for, though the case was square, the inside was indented in the shape of an oak-leaf. His head swam as he stooped to pick it up, but he said not a word as he handed it to her, and though he gave her a searching look, he received nothing but a blush in return.

As soon as she went up the steps he turned away, to his mother's great relief, and walked toward his room.

"There!" thought she, "thank Heaven he has awaked to his senses at last!" And rolling up her knitting she prepared to follow him, for now that he was gone, she cared not at all to remain and listen to Mr. Sutton's raillery about the *Professor's leap*.

But the state of mind in which Mr. Brittain found himself was more like a dreadful nightmare than an awakening. He did not stop at his room, but walked on, scarcely knowing whither, saying to himself, "It was hers, then, and I never suspected it! Why could she not tell me when I showed it to her? I thought her so frank and open, why could she not tell me? To think that I should live to be thirty year's old without ever caring a thought for any girl, and then to allow every hope of my heart to rest on — on such a girl! She is no better than any other, and I am a fool! But, she has fine qualities, and she has a perfect right to keep her own secret; it is preposterous in me to quarrel with her for not telling me. Ralph knows something about that miniature, I am sure! I will write this very day, and ask him. No; I will wait until I see him. Perhaps it is some old family heir-loom. But that young man's, where have I seen it before? Pshaw! what folly in me to be going on in this way! What concern is it of mine? Why should I care if she had an hundred mysterious miniatures? I only know that this one is hers, and I will take the earliest opportunity to return it and think no more about it." And perhaps as an indemnification for the oblivion which should succeed the restoration of the miniature, he straightway fell into an absorbing reverie, the subject of which, was Miss Harry Vane.

The whole morning slipped away in this unprofitable employment, and he had hardly recovered his composure when he came in to dinner. The sight of Miss Vane, exquisitely dressed, and the marked bow with which she greeted him, did not at all contribute to quell his agitation. Yet he managed to return the bow in so haughty a manner that Harry was offended. Her seat at table faced the door, and she had been watching for him on purpose to propitiate him by her manner of salutation; but when he inclined his head so haughtily, she thought, "What an old bear!" and went on eating her dinner, with great nonchalance.

Mr. Brittain did not find an opportunity to return the miniature until the evening, and then he had to make an opportunity. As he walked up the long piazza he saw Harry at the other end, surrounded, as usual, by half a dozen aspirants for the pleasure of dancing the first set with her. There hardly seemed to be room near her for another person, but the instant Mr. Brittain approached she made a place for him. The rest, finding she would no longer talk, went away one by one, until she was left entirely alone with him. The day before how elated he would have been with this mark of favor; but now he felt that he was indebted to the hateful miniature, and yet he was grateful still.

"Miss Vane," said he, as soon as the others had withdrawn, "I have some of your property; if I had known that it belonged to you sooner, I should not have kept it so long."

"Of course not," said Harry, picking at the feathers on her fan; "I knew that it was in safe hands."

"Shall I return it to you now?"

"No; for pity's sake! not here, with an hundred-and-one eyes to watch! No, no; keep it until a more convenient time."

"Very well," said he, rising, "no more convenient time is likely to offer, unless we make one; will you go to walk?"

"Yes, willingly!" said Harry.

"Never mind, Miss Harry," called out Mr. Sutton, as they passed him, "the Professor does not understand flirtations; you had better be careful; he will sue you for breach of promise."

Harry had no gay repartee ready now; she was really more nervous about Mr. Brittain's discovery than she cared to let him see, and though she walked off with him so will-

ingly, she felt very much like a naughty child about to get a scolding.

Mr. Brittain had come to the conclusion that Miss Vane was so young her follies ought to be pardoned, and her faults corrected with a very tender hand. His indignation had vanished, and he could not feel indifferent to Mr. Fanning's niece, a girl with so many charming traits. He would teach her to look up to him as a wise and disinterested friend. But this sentiment of disinterested friendship excited him so that he walked on, without talking, faster and farther than he had any idea of. There is no telling where nor when he would have stopped, if Harry had not suddenly stood still when they passed the Spring, saying rather petulantly,

"I am tired!"

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Brittain; "I have been very inconsiderate."

Harry held out her hand for the miniature; he probably thought she intended to assure him of her forgiveness for having walked so fast, for he took it within both his own. Whatever imprudent speech he was about to make was instantly checked by Harry quickly withdrawing her hand, and saying,

"I want my picture."

During the whole walk Mr. Brittain had been pondering the manner of the restoration of the picture. There were some questions he wished very much to ask, some things he wished very much to say to Harry, but he hardly knew how to begin. Though by no means a cowardly man, he felt very much afraid of her just now, and he dreaded above all things provoking such a rebuff as she had given Mr. Dunbar. When she put out her hand all the set speeches he had been composing were instantly forgotten. He drew the picture from his breast-pocket when she asked for it, but before he gave it into her impatient hands, he said,

"Miss Vane, I confessed to you the interest I felt in this picture when I showed it to you at Bennet's Pool; perhaps to express that interest now would make me liable to the imputation of impertinent curiosity, but I cannot help saying that the discovery of this morning has made me more anxious than ever to know something about that face behind the hands. You must have good reason for asserting it to be a beautiful face?"

"I never saw her," said Harry.

"But you know who it is?"

"I believe I do."

"It is some old family piece, I suppose."

"No — yes — that is — I know very little about it."

"You found it then, perhaps, before I did?"

Harry made no answer.

"If I am not too impertinent, Miss Vane, I wish you would tell me the history of that picture; I mean, of the original."

"I cannot do it," said Harry, laughing a little, "because I do not know it."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Brittain, reassured by her laughing, and smiling in his turn, "perhaps if I had asked the history of the other face" —

"Perhaps no such thing!" cried Harry, warmly. "You cannot have any interest in that; there is no romantic mystery about a face that is not hid in a pair of hands."

"Pardon me," said Mr. Brittain, gravely, "I do feel an interest, a very great interest in anything that concerns you; your uncle, you know, is one of my most valued friends."

"And you are going to make that an excuse, now, for reading me a lecture," said Harry, half crying. "I do not want you to think anything about me, or care anything about me."

Now this was a story; Harry did care that he should think something about her. She had felt very much flattered by his attentions, without at all attributing them to the influence of her charms. Mr. Brittain handed her the miniature without a word. She had thought that as soon as she should get it into her hands she would run away, but she now felt ashamed of herself, and after looking a moment at the picture she looked at him.

"Why did you not tell me that it was yours at Bennet's Pool?" Mr. Brittain could not comply with her wish and cease to care about her.

"I cannot tell you my reasons," said Harry; "I do not want to tell you my reasons."

This was honest, at all events, and Mr. Brittain's opinion of her frankness began to revive.

"Miss Vane," said he, trying to take her hand, "I wish you would let me speak to you frankly, like a friend?"



"Well," said Harry, a little impatiently; but Mr. Brittain was too much delighted with the permission to notice the shade of impatience in her tone. He took her hand, and said,

"Miss Vane, you are so young, so very young" —

"I am eighteen!" interrupted Harry.

"Is not that very young? You scarcely seem to me more than a child."

"Indeed I am more than a child! I do not consider myself a child at all, and I will not stay to be talked to like a child. I only gave you permission to speak to me as a friend."

"As a friend, then," said Mr. Brittain, somewhat taken aback, "let me ask if your aunt knows anything about this picture?"

"You have no right to ask that question; but I have not shown it to her; I have not had it in my possession since I have been with her until this moment."

"True, most true! I did you injustice" —

"No, no," interrupted she, quickly, "I cannot let you think that; I have told her nothing about it, and I will neither show it to her, nor tell her anything about it; *you* can do as you think best."

"Now you are doing *me* injustice," said Mr. Brittain; "you must know that I am incapable of the odious office of tale-bearing, however I might incur your displeasure by giving advice."

Harry gave a little impatient shrug and said,

"Advice is thrown away when one's mind is already made up."

"No," said Mr. Brittain, "for one's mind may change."

"But if I can make up my mind, I can change it without, without" —

"My interference?"

"Well, since you have said it, yes!" said Harry, half-laughing.

"A true friend is not to be easily rebuffed, Miss Vane, and at the risk of incurring your displeasure, I must say that I think you are doing very wrong not to tell your aunt whatever there is to tell about that picture. She has a right to know."

"I am going to do what I think right" — but Harry did not finish.

"No, you are not," said Mr. Brittain.

"Very well, then," said she, angrily, "I am going to do what you think wrong. I *will not* tell her; I *cannot* tell her. How is it possible for you to understand it? I think you trouble yourself entirely too much about it. You wish to show me how superior you are, and you only make me angry. I do not think you ought to ask questions. A gentleman would have returned my picture, and made no remarks. You" — But her voice trembled so she could say no further, and abruptly wishing him good evening, she began to retrace her steps in a most uncomfortable frame of mind.

Mr. Brittain's feelings had undergone several rapid changes during this violent tirade, but by the time she had ceased he was perfectly composed, and quite able to maintain a cool demeanor, so that Harry could not help feeling that he had a great advantage over her.

"At least," said he, with dignity, as he walked by her side, "I am too much of a gentleman to allow you to return alone."

"You need not trouble yourself, sir."

"It is no trouble at all; on the contrary, Miss Vane, it has always been a pleasure to me to be in your society."

They walked on in silence, until they came to Mrs. Fanning's cottage.

"I am going to stop here," said Harry, with her foot on the step.

"Shall I wait until you are ready to go to the hotel?"

"No, sir, thank you, Phebe can go with me."

Mr. Brittain bowed and departed, while Harry, having safely bestowed her mysterious miniature, waited until she thought Mr. Brittain had had time to settle to his game of chess, or become engaged in conversation, and then ran up to the ball-room alone, for, of course, Phebe was not within call.

But she was not happy; she felt that Mr. Brittain was right and she was wrong. "I have always wanted a good wise friend," thought she, "but I do not deserve one. I behaved like a savage, and he behaved like a gentleman. If it had not been for the shallow pockets of my travelling-dress, all this would not have happened. I am thoroughly ashamed and sorry, but I will die before I will tell him so, for he would be sure to think I only wanted to keep him from telling Aunt Eleanor."

## CHAPTER XVI.

ALL RIGHT!



R. BRITAIN was not disposed either for chess or conversation, when he parted with Harry at her aunt's door. He wandered about, disconsolately pondering his recent interview with her, and, while resolving he would think of her no more, he found himself in the ball-room, diligently seeking a certain airy little figure in white, with the early autumn leaves in her hair. She was with a young gentleman whom Mr. Britain not only recognized as the original of the ambrotype at the back of the miniature, but also as the wild and dissipated Mr. Henry Thorne, student of law in Kenby College.

"Stupid that I am!" thought he, "if I had only recognized that face before."

He left the ball-room, and vainly tried in the quiet of his own room to decide if he should inform Harry or Mr. Fanning of Mr. Thorne's character, or let it alone altogether. In great indecision he walked the next morning until thoroughly wearied, and returning to the spring, he threw himself down under a clump of trees behind an arbor. He had been there perhaps an hour, when he heard footsteps, and then voices within the arbor.

"You know very well why I came to Netherford," said Mr. Thorne. "Stupid little place!"

"Yes," said Miss Vane, "the quiet, you know" —

"Quiet be — well, I beg your pardon, but you know very well *that* was not the attraction," said Mr. Thorne. "How can you be so very provoking?"

"Really, Mr. Thorne, what right have you to speak to me in this way? I do not like it."

"Do you think I can bear with patience your altered treatment? What has changed you?"

"Nothing," said Harry, "I am not changed."

"Yes you are, greatly changed. And if I knew who has been telling tales of me, I would make him repent."

"That would be a good work. I despise tale-bearers, and I like to see them made to repent."

"Then tell me who has been poisoning your mind against me?"

"No one; I have heard no tales about you."

"Not from that stuck-up Professor? I dare say he made that cursed miniature an excuse to give you a faithful account of some of my little scrapes."

"You are mistaken; I do not think Mr. Brittain ever recognized the ambrotype for you."

"Bless him for his stupidity then!" said Mr. Thorne, with a laugh. "I gave the old big-nose credit for more penetration."

"I must say, Mr. Thorne," said Miss Vane, in a somewhat haughty tone, "your style of conversation is truly elegant. But I admit the big nose, yes, and big mind, and big soul, and a tongue that would never be guilty of such rude language."

Mr. Brittain had kept his seat when he heard them approaching, without knowing positively who they were, and he remained after he had discovered their identity, scarcely knowing why. Certainly with no dishonorable motive.

The tone of Mr. Thorne's remarks made him feel that it would be well for Miss Vane to have a protector at hand; Mr. Thorne might be intoxicated at that moment. Perhaps he allowed himself to be too easily persuaded of this necessity. At any rate, no sooner did he find himself an exception to the general rule about eaves-droppers, than he hastily withdrew with tingling ears. He had but just come to the conclusion that, at all hazards, he would tell Mr. Fanning all he knew about Mr. Thorne, when Harry's last remark completely altered his intention, and he determined that only to herself, would he venture to give any warning.

Ignorant of his absence as they had been of his presence, Harry and Mr. Thorne continued their conversation.

"You are inclined to give him unbounded praise," said Mr. Thorne. "I may suppose from that he has superseded me in your good graces?"

"I never thought of comparing you," said Harry, quietly.

"I can tell you what it is," said Mr. Thorne, waxing fierce again, "I won't stand this. I have been in the habit of considering myself the first in your estimation, and I can not endure a rival."

"Why will you persist in such nonsense?" said Harry, impatiently. "How can you presume to talk to me in that way, when you know that you amuse yourself with young lady correspondents?"

"How do you know?" said Mr. Thorne, with a slight start. "To whom do I write? Who told you that?"

"No matter how I know; and you know better than I who the lady is."

"I only write to Mar —, well, never mind; I have promised her not to tell."

"Keep your promise by all means. And I must comply with my aunt's wishes. She does not — I can not — you must not consider me in any other light than as a friend, and so, here is your miniature. I am sorry I kept it; I have been very much to blame."

"It is yours; you asked me for it yourself!" said Mr. Thorne, angrily.

"I did not! I did not! you know very well that you took advantage of my too evident admiration of that curious picture to give me your own with it."

"It is very easily destroyed, at any rate," said Mr. Thorne, angrily opening his penknife, and deliberately cutting out the ambrotype, he crushed it under his heel.

"It is very much improved by that," said Harry, provokingly. "Now I would be almost willing to take it back again."

"Never!" Mr. Thorne almost shouted; "never again will I be the dupe of your wiles. But remember this; the man who attempts to supplant me, will feel my mortal vengeance."

"Which means, I suppose," said Harry, coolly, "that if I do not live an old maid, I shall die a widow."

"How dare you," said he, striding up to her and seizing her hand, "how dare you provoke me? Are my feelings nothing to you?"

"Not when you act in that way."

"How am I to act then, in order to reinstate myself with you?"

"Oh! do, if you please, let us end this wearisome discussion; I never professed anything but friendship for you."

"Actions speak louder than words," said Mr. Thorne.

"I never did," persisted Harry. "I cannot help what you saw in my actions."

"This is what you say to all your lovers, I suppose?"

"What business is it of yours, what I say? Mr. Thorne, your behavior is unbearable."

"Very well Miss Vane, I will relieve you of my presence; but remember, I have fairly warned you; you shall not smile upon any one's else suit."

"Your threats cannot terrify me; I intend to act precisely as I should have done if I had never heard them."

Mr. Thorne walked off indignantly, while Harry, looking after him with tears in her eyes, said half aloud,

"I wish I had not been in such a temper; I might have learned the name of that girl. Oh, dear me! I am the most unfortunately quarrelsome person in the world; Mr. Kennett, Mr. Dunbar, Richard, Mr. Brittain, Mr. Thorne, one two, three, four, five! Goodness! Bah!!"

There may be some inclined to accuse Harry of a want of spirit, in yielding so readily to her aunt's desire that the flirtation with Mr. Thorne should cease. There can be no doubt but that there are many young ladies who, after having concealed the reception of the notes, and the possession of the miniature, could easily have pursued a delightful flirtation with Mr. Thorne, without exciting Mrs. Fanning's suspicions.

Harry herself possessed the ability to do it, but unfortunately for her fame as a flirt, her conscience was not dead; it was only lulled temporarily, and every now and then it would reproach her. Now however bravely she might face her adversaries of the other sex, she could not conceal from herself that she had not the courage to confess the notes and the miniature to her aunt. Perhaps had she done so, she might still have retained Mr. Thorne in the list of her vassals, notwithstanding the letter found in the pocket of Mlle. L'Inconnue. She had, it is true, refrained from flirting with Mr. Dunbar at her aunt's desire, but she had a point to carry. Mr. Thorne's case was very different; she had her conscience to pacify. She could not bring herself to relate the story of the miniature to Mrs. Fanning, and her heart so smote her for this reticence toward her "dear good auntie," as he styled Mrs. Fanning when she felt she was doing what that lady would not approve, that she deter-

mined to make amends by dismissing Mr. Thorne at once and forever.

Just before the fever broke out at Mme. Camballat's, Harry went to spend one of her holidays with Julia Cressing, and there she met Mr. Thorne. It was not the first time, nor the second, nor yet the third. She had met him often, and with Julia Cressing's assistance, their acquaintance had ripened into a sort of boy and girl flirtation. There was, on Harry's part, nothing but admiration for what she then considered a very handsome face, together with a sort of sympathy for his seemingly isolated condition.

He frequently spoke of a married sister for whom he did not seem to have much affection; and Harry did not wonder at it when she met her once at Mr. Cressing's, for a more stony woman she thought she had never seen. Otherwise he seemed to have no relations except Mr. Cressing's family, with whom he was often out of favor.

During this last holiday which Harry spent with her friend, Mr. Thorne, for the first time in her hearing, spoke of his mother, and she expressed so much sympathy, and so much interest, that he showed her the curious miniature which was afterward to be the source of such doubt and trouble to Mr. Brittain. Her curiosity was strongly excited, and Mr. Thorne gratified it as far as he was able. "It was," he said, "the only likeness there was of his mother, if likeness it could be called. It had been sent to him by his sister, and she was doubtful if it were intended for their mother."

Harry very foolishly expressed a desire to possess such a picture, and Mr. Thorne returned in the evening and presented her with it, hoping that she would find the more modern picture on the back no objectionable addition.

She did not object to it: daguerreotypes of young gentlemen were rife all about the school; where was the harm of her having one also?

While it was a new thing she carried it about in her pocket, and the Poinsett children were no strangers to the old-fashioned case, though they had never seen its contents. Afraid of having it discovered, she at last confided it to her writing-desk, but after Miss Edna's behavior about the note, she carried it in her pocket again, and when she left for the Springs she forgot to put it in her trunk, and she set off on

her travels with the troublesome miniature in her travelling dress pocket. The case was old, and the catch broken, and the miniature was not easily kept within its moth-eaten bed, and so it came to pass that she lost it on the cars.

The loss had occasioned her considerable distress, for she knew not what steps to take to recover it, and she was greatly relieved to see it in Mr. Brittain's hands. But before this she had had that conversation with her aunt in which she was forbidden to flirt with Mr. Thorne. As she had not given Mrs. Fanning her unlimited confidence, she had decided to render her strict obedience in regard to this affair, and only waited to see Mr. Thorne to tell him that his hopes were at an end. She did not know what she should say about the loss of the miniature, but as soon as she found it in Mr. Brittain's possession her resolution was taken; she would not claim it, but she would inform Mr. Thorne that she had lost it, that Mr. Brittain had found it, and that he must apply to him for it. But strange to say, she had forgotten to take the case from her travelling dress pocket, and this plan was frustrated. Still she adhered to her resolution to dismiss Mr. Thorne, hoping that thereby she could appease her conscience.

But in vain did she assure herself that she had made it all right, her mind was not at ease. What if her Aunt Eleanor should hear of it? Well, if she did she would make a full confession of the whole story; but in the meantime she would think no more about it.

Then there was Mr. Brittain! She had been so rude to him, but she would die before she would apologize; he should not think she meant to prevent his telling her aunt about the miniature. Let him tell her! Of course she would rather her aunt should not know it, but she scorned to do anything to prevent her knowing it, other than avoiding the subject herself. She would rather her aunt should hear all about it from Mr. Brittain than that he should think she wanted to bespeak his secrecy. She would rather he should think her unpardonably rude. No, she would atone by her manner as far as she could, but she would not, she could not apologize.

But Fate decreed otherwise. Even as she decided thus, Harry, walking with her eyes cast down, came unexpectedly into the presence of Mr. Brittain, who was seated in the shade of a great oak growing close by the garden wall.



He started and sprang up; the recollection of the very extraordinary praise Harry had bestowed on him caused him to blush, and she blushed too, and stood still very much embarrassed. She remembered only how rude she had been; she forgot the fear she had that he might suspect her of bespeaking his secrecy, and began abruptly,

"Mr. Brittain, I wish you would listen to me a little while."

"Certainly Miss Vane, will you not sit down?"

"No, thank you sir, I believe I would rather stand."

There was a pause, broken at last by Harry saying,

"But you sit down, do not let me keep you standing."

Mr. Brittain bowed, but would not be seated.

"Oh! please do not be so ceremonious, you embarrass me so," said Harry.

Mr. Brittain instantly sat down, wondering what was coming. But Harry, instead of speaking, pulled a branch from an alder bush and began stripping off the leaves. Mr. Brittain watched her until there remained only two or three leaves at the extreme end of the twig.

"Are you preparing that to chastise me with?" said he, smiling.

Harry threw the switch on the ground, and blushing furiously, said,

"I do wish you would not be so cool! I do wish you would manifest some interest in what I have to say."

"Have you forgotten that only yesterday evening, not far from this very spot, you desired me not to feel any interest in you or your concerns?" said Mr. Brittain, quietly.

"I thought you had more generosity," cried Harry. "Why should you remember what I said yesterday? why should you think about it at all?"

"Perhaps, then, you will not be very severe if I confess to you that, notwithstanding your injunction, I have continued to feel an interest in you and your concerns?"

"If I only could afford to get angry with you!" cried Harry, throwing herself on the bench. "Do not speak as if you had a contempt for me, or I shall get angry; and I particularly wish to keep my temper."

"Contempt?" said Mr. Brittain. "I assure you I have no such feeling toward you: Impatience and surprise I might sometimes feel at your conduct, but I cannot feel contempt for you."

Mr. Brittain was not willing to analyze his feelings; besides, he had a grateful remembrance of the praise bestowed upon his organs of large dimensions.

"Thank you," said Harry, "that is better than I deserve, for certainly my conduct yesterday evening was very contemptible. I am really ashamed of myself, and I cannot rest until I tell you so. You must have formed a delightful opinion of me from my conduct lately. My behavior to Mr. Dunbar was so rude, he has hardly spoken to me since; but I do not care for that, his pertinacity was enough to provoke a saint. But I cannot say that of you. I know that all you said to me was right, and that you were actuated by the kindest motives. What can I say for myself? I am very sorry."

"Say no more," said Mr. Brittain, warmly, "it is impossible to make a more charming amend."

"But I have not said half yet. I want to tell you that I have given that miniature back to Mr. Thorne."

Now Mr. Brittain was very glad to hear this, but he said stiffly, "That can not possibly concern me, Miss Vane."

"Oh, there it is again now! Why need you be always talking about that?"

"But yesterday," said Mr. Brittain, laughing, "I offended you by asking too many questions about it."

"And to-day you are about to offend me by not asking any."

"It is a lady's privilege to be fickle."

"Oh! do not say that. I would rather, for the present, that you should consider me as a child, and —"

"And what?"

"I was going to say advise me, but I believe I cannot go that far."

"It is as well; your aunt is the proper person to go to for advice."

Suddenly Harry remembered her dread lest he should suspect her of scheming to keep him from telling her aunt. She covered her face with her hands, but the blood mounted above her fingers to the very roots of her hair. "Oh! what must he think of me? what must he think of me?" she said to herself as she shook her head.

"What is the matter?" said Mr. Brittain. "What is there so dreadful in telling your aunt?"

"Oh! it is not that," said Harry, removing her hands.

"But I do not want you to think—you must not think—oh! go tell her if you want to yourself, I do not care."

"Stop!" said Mr. Brittain, catching her hand, "I do not understand you. I told you last night that I was no tale-bearer, but this morning I made up my mind to tell you that I happen to know that Mr. Thorne is utterly unworthy of you"—

"Did you think I cared anything for him? All the girls at school were pulling caps for him and I won him, that is all."

"If that is all, why are you unwilling to confide in your aunt?"

"Do you think I ought to tell her?"

"Certainly, Miss Vane, you should tell her."

"I will tell her, then, I promise you to tell her."

Mr. Brittain was not more than half pleased with such readiness to promise, but he thought he would take-advantage of it to exact another. "You will tell her," he said, "of course, because it is right; but there is a different promise I would like you to make me."

"Well?"

"To devote some of your time this winter to study."

"But I have done with school." Then, as she saw Mr. Brittain only smiled, she added, "Well, I will promise to try. So now I have made you two promises, and the last one reminds me that I must send your books home; I am so much obliged to you."

"I hope you found some among them to amuse you."

"Oh, yes sir! they were all delightful, but my hand improved so rapidly I read but one entirely through."

"And which one was that?" asked Mr. Brittain, with some curiosity.

"The one you told me to read, you know, the 'Lady of the Lake.'"

Poor Harry! she wished to please him, and he thought she was trying to please him, and he did not like it. All of his mother's warnings against this "artful girl" stood up in array and urged him to despise her, and his heart plead for her just a little. "I will let her see," he thought, "I am only to be considered as a friend." And Harry had no idea of considering him in any other light.

"And you really read it through and were pleased?" said he.

"Oh, yes! I did not think I could like a book so well. The pictures are beautiful."

"I am very sorry that I did not have the complete edition of the poems with me. You might then have had the advantage of the notes, which are not only useful in explaining the poem, but are very interesting in themselves."

"I think I would prefer this pretty little volume with pictures. I wish I could draw, I should like to make a picture of the 'lone wood and mighty hill.'" And she began to repeat the lines,

"The western waves of ebbing day  
Rolled o'er the gien their level way"—

reciting with great animation until she saw that Mr. Brittain was smiling. She reddened violently, stopped short, and bit her lip. Mr. Brittain, during this recitation, had been in exactly such a frame of mind as would have pleased his mother. He really thought Harry an artful girl, bent on captivating him, and he believed that this ardor about poetry was all assumed. Yet she recited with such spirit and such grace, that in spite of himself, he admired while he listened.

"Go on," he said, when she stopped.

"I cannot go on," said she, throwing a handful of pebbles into the little stream which ran from the spring, "you are laughing at me. I dare say you think me very silly, but I hate to be laughed at."

The time had been when Harry took no pains to conceal her enthusiasm or romance, when she believed all the world to be as full of both as herself, but she had grown wiser; there were very few to whom she could, without fear of ridicule, throw open her whole ardent soul, and she now felt more indignant with herself than with Mr. Brittain. To think that she should have repeated poetry to "that old, dried-up Professor!"

"I was not laughing at you," said he, "I was smiling at the thought that a young lady who professes to hate books, should spend so much time in committing so many lines to memory."

"I did not learn them by heart," said Harry, indignantly. "I never thought of such a thing! but it is like a piece of

music, it stays in one's head; how can one help singing it?"

"I am sorry I smiled," said Mr. Brittain, "if I interrupted you. I should like to have seen how much of it you could repeat."

"I should like to have been 'Ellen,'" said Harry, not noticing his remark. "It seems to me it would be delightful to lead such a life."

"There is a little bend in the Ominahaw," said Mr. Brittain, "where Ralph Kennett and I used to play at the 'Lady of the Lake' with the part of the lady left out."

"Oh! did you? What a pity I was not there; I could have been 'Ellen' you know. But what did you do?"

"We built a bower of pine boughs, and we used to send round the *Crean Tarigh*. We dipped it in squirrel's blood."

"*Crean Tarigh*. What is that?"

"Do you not remember? The cross, the bloody cross."

"Oh, yes! tell me more, please."

"There is nothing more to tell; we played as all boys play."

"I never had boys or girls to play with me," said Harry. "I wish I had, I am sure. How I should have enjoyed that sort of play. I could have been 'Ellen,' and you, — you could have been the 'Douglas,' she said, innocently, not knowing that she made Mr. Brittain wince. Yet was not this proof positive that she considered him only a friend? He was hard to please. "We could have found somebody to be Fitz James."

"Mr. Kennett?" said Mr. Brittain.

"No," said Harry.

"Oh!" said Mr. Brittain again, "he could be the Græme."

"Yes," said Harry.

Mr. Brittain gave such a start that Harry looked up in surprise.

"I thought you did not like him?" said he, hurriedly.

"Well, I do not," said Harry, promptly, "I dislike him very much. But if I were 'Ellen' I would not love the Græme, I would love Fitz-James."

"But" — said Mr. Brittain.

"Oh! I know everything you would say," cried Harry; "but I could not be Ellen Douglas without being a little bit of Harry Vane too."

"But then you would marry a man you did not love, for Ellen married the Græme."

"Not if that man were Mr. Kennett," cried Harry, with a bewildering mingling of fiction and reality, "for I hate him. He is a traitor. He should be the guide whom Fitz-James shot."

"He would be pained if he could hear you," said Mr. Brittain.

"Not he!" said Harry, with a careless laugh, "he has not heart enough. Let us not speak of him. I want you to tell me which is prettier, a lake or a river?"

"Each must answer that question for himself," said Mr. Brittain, laughing. "I am inclined to prefer a river."

"Oh no!" said Harry, "a lake must be much prettier, though I never saw one. If I ever go to Scotland I intend to be blindfolded; I will not open my eyes until I can look on 'the waters blue' of Loch Katrine."

"If you are so enthusiastic about everything you read, I wonder you do not take greater pleasure in books."

"Oh, books are very well once in a way, but I grow tired of them."

"This winter you will have so much leisure for study" —

"I will try, since I have promised; but where is the leisure? You cannot fancy what it is to be a young lady at Fanning House."

"I can imagine," said he, with a slight tone of sadness, "that it will be delightful enough to make you forget the friends of a summer."

"No, no," said Harry, "you shall see. We are going first to 'the old plantation' to stay two or three weeks, and then to Netherford. And then — oh! then will I not have a grand time?"

"I hope so, indeed," said Mr. Brittain, absently.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## SOMEBODY'S SECRET.



R. BRITAIN returned to Netherford in a state of mind far from agreeable. His reason acquiesced in all the objections his mother urged against Miss Vane, but his heart rebelled. He had seen many girls of whom his head approved, but Harry was the first who had touched his heart. There was a novelty about her which appealed irresistibly to her imagination. Of what avail to think of her faults? They were many, but, because she made no attempt to conceal them he pardoned them all. He did not regret so much her three weeks absence, for he wished, before seeing her again, to see Mr. Kennett, and learn from him the secret of her violent expressions of dislike. Was it *love*? Or was it *hate*?

It was October when the Fannings returned to Netherford, but the weather was still warm and bright.

“Summer has flown on swallows’ wings,”

thought Harry, or thus would she have expressed her thoughts, in the words of the poet, had she ever read those beautiful lines of Hood. At last the hour was come when she might enter the enchanted doors of Fanning House. She leaned back in the carriage, and would not speak, while indulging in a delightful reverie. She heard not a word of what her uncle and aunt were saying about household affairs; in fancy she wandered away into the bright future, and when the steps of the carriage were let down she stepped out like one in a dream. The flower garden of Fanning House was extensive and beautiful; it was Mrs. Fanning’s pride, but to Harry it was merely accessory to the mansion of her dreams. She could not listen to her aunt’s raptures about her Japan lilies, or her new fuschias;

her eyes sought the upper windows, the windows of that room, famous in the annals of the family, as the chosen bower of the beauties of Fanning House in the days of their youth. Though she had never seen the house before, she needed not to question now from which windows those beauties had peeped out upon the avenue to watch the crowds of company riding up to the great white gate. Long ago she had made herself acquainted with every nook and corner about the house from Sophie Carew's description, and in the long, hot days at Bathen she had teased her Cousin Julia to draw plans of the house and premises for her, and now she was eager to test their accuracy. Impatiently she ran up the steps, and met old Judy, Mrs. Fanning's confidential servant.

Old Judy welcomed them home with a profusion of courtesies; not those sweeping, magnificent acts of reverence now in vogue, but little quick hints at genuflections, those motions which gave rise to the graphic expressions "bobbing" and "dropping" a courtesy. Judy was voluble in her delight at the prospect of a renewal of the former glory and gayety of the house under the reign of this last of the nieces. She led Harry off in triumph to show that room where her aunts and cousins had held sway in their young-ladyhood; telling her on the way how a certain Mr. Carson, who was engaged to her Aunt Isabel, used to call the front windows, "Beauty's Eyes," and recounting the parties they had given, and the brides she had helped to dress before the great mirror. But Harry was too impatient to linger; she rushed away, and reached the door of the charmed room before Judy had toiled up stairs. She entered; and what thoughts crowded to her mind as she stood within that room, which had known the joys and sorrows, the hopes and disappointments of all the daughters of the Fannings. There, on that pillow, how many tears had been shed, how many happy dreams had wiled away the silent night. How many gay dresses and happy faces had that large mirror reflected! There stood the large arm-chair, like a throne, waiting for its queen; in that corner was the little writing-desk, which belonged to the room, but which had held in turn, the secrets of so many happy girls; there was the great wardrobe, sacred receptacle of so many trunk loads of finery. On the wall hung two portraits, the one a fair young girl, very fair, and very young.



“ Aunt Isabel ? ” questioned Harry of Judy.

“ Ah, yes honey ! ” said Judy, with a sigh, and a shake of the head. “ She was the only one on ’em all what didn’t walk when she went with her’ bridegroom, for he was Death.”

The tears came to Harry’s eyes, but they did not fall until she recognized, with a cry of delight, her mother’s portrait, from the likeness to herself.

“ Oh ! my own dear mother ! my own precious mamma ! you look at me as if you could speak to me ! How many nieces you have looked at in this room, and your only child has been so long in coming ! ”

“ Lord ! Miss Harry,” said Judy, “ you goes on just like she used to do over Miss Bell’s picturè there. It’s true as you says, there’s been a many a one has looked out of them winders, nieces and sisters too, has looked out and watched the cavillers a careenin’ up the avenue like a swarm of locuses.”

“ Which was my mother’s window ? ” said Harry.

“ Lord love you, honey ! Miss Ha-yet never had nothing to do with this here room. She was sorter queer-like ; she wouldn’t stay here.”

Harry opened wide her eyes. “ I thought this was the young ladies’ room ? ”

“ So it was, and so it is ; but Miss Ha-yet had her own room where she stayed. She never comed in here, exceptin’ to look at herself in the big glass sometimes, and then she always seen Miss Isabel a looking at her, and she went out a crying. She got so she never could come here without a cry. Miss Isabel was the next oldest than her, and she was always fretting ’bout her after she died, tell your pa came along. She had a window in *that* room, over there, what she looked out of a nation sight. She said she looked at the sunset, but I knowed all the time she saw your pa a coming down the North Lane. He used to stay with old Mr. Fletcher in the brick house, and always walked in that lane. Many and many is the time I have seen him come, with his hands full of flowers, and his head up high.”

“ Oh ! take me to that room ! ” cried Harry, picking up her hat and satchel from the bed. “ My mother’s room shall be my room, I will have no other room in this house.”

Judy looked aghast. “ Lord ! Miss Harry, ’taint nothing

like this here room ; it's a little bit of place ; 'tain't fitten for a young lady the likes of you."

"If it was fit for my mother, it is fit for me ; come !"

Judy had no alternative but to follow, and she showed Harry into her mother's room. It was a small, but very cosey apartment at the back of the house. One door opened upon the wide hall, another into a little dressing-room, and a third, which was of glass, led out upon the piazza. The one window looked upon the west, and Harry immediately seated herself there to look at the North Lane, and the haunted mansion of Four-Oaks. She fancied her mother watching there for her father as he walked in that shady lane, or over the bare and broken ground, lying between Four-Oaks and Fanning House.

"Don't you see, Miss Harry," said Judy, in a tone of distress, "this room ain't nothin' like t'other ; this here furniture is so ole-timey. Miss Ha-yet never would have nothin' new in here, 'cause this here was her grandmother's what she was named after."

"I see !" said Harry, glancing at the quaint old bedstead and bureau profusely ornamented with brass. "I see, and I like it ! Yes, I like even that tarnished old picture of the fortune-teller. This shall be my room !"

"Oh ! Lord !" cried Judy, "she's too much like her mother ! The great days will never come back ! Miss Julia, she never made the house gay, like the rest of 'em, and now you won't go and be a queen in the queen's room !"

"But I will be a queen !" said Harry, laughing.

"Miss Harry, you can't never see nobody out of that winder."

"Who knows ?" cried she gayly. "My lover may come walking down that lane."

"You won't never see nothin'," said Judy, "but sperits to frighten you of nights."

"Sperits ? Out of that old house ? That is exactly what I should like," said Harry. "Go tell them to bring my trunks. What a nice great closet to put them in."

Judy went down in great perplexity.

"Miss El'nor," said she, "I wish you would go up and speak to Miss Harry ; she is just Miss Ha-yet over again. We won't never have no more fine times in this house, I see it plain. She ain't a guayne to keep up the glory of the family."

"Why? What is the matter?" cried Mrs. Fanning in alarm. She entertained some doubts herself about Harry's keeping up the glory of the family.

"She won't *not* stay in de young ladies' room, she will have Miss Ha-yet's room, and she won't have no other. We's gwine to have no more ladies a setting in the winder while the gemblens is a galloping up."

Mrs. Fanning laughed. "Comfort yourself, Judy," said she; "gentlemen will come galloping up all the same, though there are no eyes watching them. Miss Harry must have the room she likes, though the front room is beyond comparison the most delightful in the house."

And true to her decision to let Harry's eccentricities cure themselves, Mrs. Fanning did not attempt to control her in the choice of her room. It was a matter of very little moment to her which room Harry preferred, and as there were some things in which she did not intend to yield, she permitted her to enjoy her little retreat in peace.

And so, in the pleasant autumn evenings Harry sat in the west window, and pictured to herself the time when her mother watched for her father at the same window. A happy pensiveness stole over her as she thought of them both passed away from earth. She could never fancy her mother as anything but a girl like herself, and she remembered her father as a grave, handsome, pleasant gentleman, not too old for a young girl to love devotedly. "I am glad they are dead," she sighed softly to herself, "for they loved each other, and they will never be old."

But this pensiveness she left behind her in her little room, and down stairs she was as sincerely gay and delightful as could be desired. And she was very happy, as happy as she had expected to be in this elysium of young ladyhood. And Mrs. Fanning was right, and Judy was comforted; "cavillers" did come "careening" up the avenue quite as plentifully as in the days of yore. Rides, walks, parties, and dinners, took up the little belle's time so completely that she forgot her two promises to Mr. Brittain. While she was at the plantation she had put off her confession from day to day, and every day she said she had not time to read. With her head full of pleasure she might never have thought again of all the wise advice she had received from the Professor, had she not seen him one evening cross the old field, and enter the wood on the other side of the lane.

"Goodness!" exclaimed she, with a laugh, as she slipped from the window to the floor, "suppose that were my lover!" The sight of Mr. Brittain recalled her two promises to her mind rather unpleasantly, but she determined no longer to delay the confession about the miniature. She went immediately in search of her aunt, in order to tell her "and be done with it." She found Mrs. Fanning deep in consultation with Miss Dalrymple, her right-hand friend, and Harry had to wait, with what patience she could, for the conference to end.

Mrs. Fanning had long been accustomed to reign supreme, in Netherford, and this supremacy was very dear to her. She had learned with consternation that during her long absence she had been supplanted; that her kingdom was divided between several petty competitors. Miss Susan Innibee claimed the church party, Miss Edna governed the Quodlibet, and Mrs. Hollis aspired to lead the fashions. The last was by no means a formidable rival, but the other two Mrs. Fanning looked upon as "foemen worthy of her steel." The Quodlibet was a powerful engine of society in Netherford. During the summer months the members rested from their labors, except some few who, like Miss Edna, stored up honey for the winter's use. Mrs. Fanning did not trouble herself to store up honey; she knew well how to render the meetings at her house the most brilliant and delightful of the season. Her indignation was great when she learned from Miss Dalrymple that Miss Edna had so managed that the society, instead of meeting at Fanning House, as it should have done within the next week, was to meet at Mr. Poinsett's.

"But Selina," said Mrs. Fanning, "it has met there twice this fall already. Edna is crazy."

"Oh, well," said Miss Dalrymple slyly, "you know M. de Louvois is here, the Frenchman."

"That is no reason why she should take the supreme control. Does she forget that Charles Fanning was the originator of the Quodlibet? However, let it meet there, let her take what satisfaction she can with her Frenchman!" And Mrs. Fanning looked quite mysterious.

"Oh! dear Mrs. Fanning!" cried Miss Dalrymple, "you have some delightful plan on hand, you always have; what can it be?"

Mrs. Fanning thought herself quite impervious to flattery,

but alas! she had very little more self-knowledge than Miss Edna.

"Well," she said, "my plan is hardly matured yet; but last winter in Havana I met with Mr. Hammond."

"The Shakspearian Reader!" screamed Miss Dalrymple.

"Yes," said Mrs. Fanning. "He was not on a professional tour, he was travelling for pleasure. But I heard him read at a private house; it was such a treat! I found him quite an agreeable person, too: a little stiff, perhaps, as some Englishmen are, but quite a gentleman. I tried to persuade him to visit Netherford, and invited him here."

"But, is he not rather a theatrical kind of person?" asked Miss Dalrymple, dubiously.

"Oh no! not at all! He has never been on the stage. He is now reading in Charleston, I see by the paper, and he is undecided where he will go, except that he has determined to spend the winter in the South. I shall write to invite him here, and I will have a private reading for the Quodlibet. But, mind now, Selina, not a word of this; I am by no means *certain* that I shall write," said the cautious dame, who had that very morning sent off a letter to her lion. "But now tell me, what is the society doing?" Mrs. Fanning did not now refer to the Quodlibet; there was another society in Netherford, a society composed of the ladies of St. Botolf's, who were zealous in the manufacture of fancy work. It was the custom of this society to make a Christmas present of its own work to the pastor's wife every year, and it required very serious debate to decide what it should be. Mr. Mellen had been in Netherford a number of years, and the society had exhausted its invention in sofa-cushions, table-mats, embroidered table-covers, silk quilts, &c. Every year the difficulty of selecting something new, and something handsome, and something at which all could work, became greater and greater. Harry came in just as this discussion began between her aunt and Miss Dalrymple.

"Have they decided upon anything?" said Mrs. Fanning, when Harry had spoken to Miss Dalrymple.

"We discussed a number of things," said Miss Dalrymple, "and finally Miss Susan decided in favor of an Affghan; that is new, you know."

Now an Affghan was the very thing Mrs. Fanning had wished to propose herself. "An Affghan?" said she. "So it is decided? Why did they not wait for me?"

"You were at the plantation, you know, and the society has orders for three others to be ready by Christmas."

"But every one cannot knit an Affghan, Selina."

"No," said Miss Dalrymple, demurely. She was a superb knitter herself. "Very few can knit well enough, but all can work at the figures in the black stripes."

"True," said Mrs. Fanning, "but the plain ones are already becoming common. I saw a beauty when I was in New Orleans; each stripe is a different stitch, and a twisted stripe goes all around; I have the directions. I think the society ought to make one like that. Is not this Tuesday? Suppose we go round and propose it? It is not begun yet, is it?"

"No, the worsteds have not yet come. I wish you would get on your bonnet; I should like to do those new stitches."

"Very well," said Mrs. Fanning, "I will not detain you a moment. Harry, child, stay and entertain Miss Dalrymple."

But Harry was too eager now to make her confession; she could see Miss Dalrymple at any time, but if she put off the story of the miniature this time she might never have the courage again. So, excusing herself hastily to Miss Dalrymple, she ran after her aunt, crying,

"Aunt Eleanor, do wait a moment: I have been waiting all this while to speak to you. I have something very particular to say to you about something which happened a long time ago!" Harry had followed her aunt into her room.

"Well child, what is it? Be quick; you know I cannot keep Miss Dalrymple waiting."

"I want to tell you about a miniature Mr. Thorne gave me," said Harry, rushing breathlessly into the midst of things.

Mrs. Fanning was opening a drawer for her gloves. She stopped, and reddening slightly, as she turned toward her niece, she said, somewhat severely,

"Harry! I thought you told me that was all over."

"So it is, aunt," said Harry, "I gave it back to him long ago" —

"Oh!" said Mrs. Fanning, very much relieved; "then there is no more to be said about it. If you gave it back it is all right; only be careful in future not to receive miniatures from gentlemen." Mrs. Fanning was trying on her new fall bonnet, which was very becoming, and her atten-

tion was more occupied just now with her handsome appearance than with Harry. She settled her ribbons, kissed her niece, and went out, saying, "I hope my dear, some one will come in to keep you company. I suppose you do not care to go with us."

Harry returned to her window both relieved and disappointed by her aunt's reception of her confession; but when she saw Mr. Britain she congratulated herself that she had fulfilled one of her promises.

Mrs. Fanning carried her point; the Affghan with the eight different stitches was decided upon for Mrs. Mellen, and the most accomplished knitters were busy weaving with their ivory pins. Just in the middle of her twisted stripe Miss Dalrymple had the misfortune to break one of hers. There were three Affghans to be finished by Christmas, and not a needle was to be found in town. It would never do to wait until one could be sent her from the city; Mr. Paul therefore made her one of cedar. But Miss Dalrymple was a fastidious knitter, and could not work with a cedar needle. At last, in despair, she sent a note to Mrs. Fanning, beseeching her to find her an ivory needle, No. 8. Mrs. Fanning was not working upon the Affghan herself, but she took great interest in it, and was eager to have it finished in time. She had no ivory needles, but she remembered that Harry had once begun a scarf for her uncle, and she appealed to her.

"Harry, what did you do with that scarf you begun?"

"I do not know, aunt."

"Are not your ivory needles in it?"

"I believe they are."

"Well!" tossing her Miss Dalrymple's note, "there is something to move your heart. Do try to find them for poor Miss Dalrymple."

Harry laughed and went very willingly to look for the needles. She had not the most remote idea where she should find them, "but," she said to herself, "I can look until I do find them." So down she sat in the doorway to the closet of her room, and pulling open her drawer she dragged forth such a medley as is only to be found in the bottom drawers of careless young ladies. Scraps of silk, a piece of patch-work very much crumpled, canvas, perforated paper, a pine burr basket half finished, a roll of *broderie anglaise* with only one sprig worked, a crochet mat half

ravelled out, and in the midst of this inextricable confusion the crimson scarf with the ivory pins sticking in it. Harry darted at it, and as she pulled it out of the heap, something heavy fell from the tangles to the floor. She looked and saw a small book, bound in red morocco, with oak leaves and acorns stamped on the cover. The upper shelves of the closet were filled with old scrap-books, albums and souvenirs, the property of her mother and her aunts in their girlish days, and she supposed this to belong to the collection. But as she turned over the leaves she found some peculiar attraction therein, and laying it down for a moment, she hurriedly snatched the needles from the meshes of crimson yarn, and sticking them in her hair she tumbled the contents of the drawer from her lap, and took up the book. It was in manuscript, and here and there, on the margin, and often in the centre of a page, were the most exquisite little drawings in India ink. Some were dainty little landscapes, many of them birds, shells, or insects, all beautifully executed. Harry felt like one who had found a treasure: she turned to the first page and read —

“At length I have bade farewell to the monotony of the sea! I cannot feel any enthusiasm for the ocean, except on land. Now at length reposing in this island, set like a gem in the midst of the blue waters, I watch the white sails of some distant ship, the sparkle of the ever restless billows; I listen to the beating of the surge upon the shore, and joy in the grand beauty of the deep. When the day is done, the sun dips behind the western waves, and stillness gathers over the little isle, and sea-birds landward flock with lonely cries, I shut my eyes on the outer world, and straightway I see a lone old mansion, beneath a cloudless sky, and in the west a little horned moon peeps through the rustling leaves of that old tree, beneath which is standing — yourself! And I am there, and it is not *now* but *then*, that summer evening, and my heart gives a great bound, and I open my eyes on the vine clad steeps, where the full moon is shining calm and cold.

“You asked me, and I promised you a faithful journal of my wanderings, a promise I could not keep on that miserable sea voyage. But here where stillness and quiet reign I have no greater pleasure than to fill the pages of this little book; you will hardly blame me if I call in the pencil to aid the pen.”



The romantic Miss Harry Vane was charmed, fascinated ! Without pausing to consider her right to read this little manuscript, she immediately assumed a more comfortable position and became deeply absorbed in this love-story so strangely told. It was a journal, but Harry read many pages before she found any name whereby to identify the persons to whom it referred, and she did not remember enough of her history and geography lessons to understand the allusions to the "Isle of the Wood." But this obscurity rather heightened her interest. As she read, she gleaned that the writer loved some one very much, who perhaps loved him in return, but that there were obstacles to be overcome. Then there occurred an interval of nearly a year between the dates, and the story assumed a totally different tone. The nameless heroine was still beloved, but she was chided, often with harshness, and accused frequently of indifference. The writer spoke no longer with hope and cheerfulness of meeting at some future happy day ; every page was filled with gloom and despondency. And now constantly allusions were made to another heroine, who certainly did not possess the writer's affections, but who had evidently won his admiration. Harry's heart beat, and her breath came quick, as she read with rapidly increasing interest, afraid to miss a word, yet painfully eager to find some name by which she might unravel this mysterious story. "To whom of my kindred does all this apply?" she thought, as she drew her fingers across her aching eyes. And there on the page before her was the name of — *Harriet*.

When Harry reached this point in the journal, the light had faded so that she could not see, sitting in the closet door-way, and she went to the window. "Harriet," she had no doubt was her mother, but was the writer her father? Oh! with what anguish and pain did she discover insincerity and fraud in this Harriet's conduct, although no word of the writer attached any blame to her ; for he wrote like one deceived.

And Harry read like one enchanted. The sunlight faded in the west, and left behind only a red blaze, gleaming through the trees ; still she poured over the little book with breathless interest. "Esthera," the heroine's name, was found at last, in the last few pages, so sad, so fierce, and so tender, and the light of day went out. Harry drew her

hand across her eyes with a bewildered feeling. The book dropped from her grasp, and there fell out of it two worn and faded letters. She picked them up, but it was too dark to decipher a single word; so laying them carefully within the leaves of the book, she went for a candle. Before she reached the door old Judy entered.

"Sakes alive! Miss Harry! I thought you was a sperrit, and Lord knows you look just like one. Why isn't you down stairs? there's comby to tea."

"Company!" cried Harry, with a start. "What company?"

"Why, Miss 'Rymple, and Mistiss Dean, and Mr. Dean, and I b'lieve, Mr. Kennett. Judy looked very wise as she uttered his name. "Tea's a 'most ready too, Miss Harry; Miss Ele'nor's a been a 'quirin' after you."

"Oh, well!" said Harry, "I do well enough," and before Judy could remonstrate she ran out of the room. Not to go down stairs, however; in the fast gathering darkness she hurried to the door of the young ladies' room, opened it quickly and closed it after her. But all was dark. It was but the work of a moment to throw open the window opposite her mother's portrait; the next, she was on her knees before the picture, gazing at the smiling face in mute agony.

"Oh!" she thought, "how I hate to think anything wrong of that face! It cannot be, it cannot be! I must unravel this mystery, or it will break my heart. Oh! that you could speak! Could only tell me you were never guilty of treachery toward a friend! But to whom can I go? There is no one, no not one, to whom I would willingly speak of my mother's unkindness to a friend. Oh! is it possible that you could smile, and smile so sweetly, and hide so much deceit in your heart? It is not true! I will not believe it!"

"Whar on airth is Miss Harry?" she heard a voice asking; and unwilling to be found in that room at that time, she hid away until she heard Phebe descending the stair; then, without giving a thought to her toilette, she went down.

They were seated at the table when she entered the dining-room.

"Why, my dear, whete have you been hiding?" said Mrs. Fanning.

"How do you do, Miss Harry?" said Mr. Kennett, rising and offering his hand. "I am very glad to" —

"Do but look at the child!" cried Mrs. Fanning, too much astonished to apologize for her interruption. "What is that in her head?"

"Oh! the darling little witch!" exclaimed Miss Dalrymple, springing from her seat, and rushing up to Harry. "Was not it just like Harry, now, to put those pins right where I should be sure to see them?"

Harry raised her hand quickly, the hand she was about to extend to Mr. Kennett, but before she could remove the needles, Miss Dalrymple had seized them. Her profuse gratitude served in some degree to cover Harry's confusion, but Mr. Kennett plainly saw that the needles had not been stuck in her hair in order to insure their being seen.

"Miss Harry!" said he, "I suspect you have been reading a novel and crying over it." This, without being true, was so near the truth that it could not serve to set her at ease, but she recovered herself sufficiently to say to him, rather sharply, in French,

"Do not be disagreeable, if you please, sir. You see I am obliged to sit here, and I do not wish to be teased."

"By no means, Miss Harry," Mr. Kennett replied gayly, in the same language.

"What in the world are they saying?" asked Mrs. Dean.

"Miss Harry is telling me the name of that heart-rending novel," replied Mr. Kennett.

Harry darted at him an angry glance.

"Harry," said her aunt, when they had left the table, and she could speak to her privately, "what is the matter? Do exert yourself, child; do not look and act so absently. You are old enough to know that one's disagreeable feelings should not be displayed in society."

Acting on this hint Harry did exert herself. Several visitors came in, and she played, and sang, and chatted as gayly as her heavy heart would let her, only taking care to avoid Mr. Kennett.

"But she could not avoid him forever. Her forced gayety began to flag, and then it was that Mr. Kennett took his seat beside her. Mrs. Dean saw, with great satisfaction that there was no one near them, but the frown with which her brother was received rather dismayed her. It did not dismay Mr. Kennett; he was not to be repelled by a frown.

"Miss Harry!" said he gayly, as he took his seat, "I am sitting beside you because I cannot help myself. I have had, all the evening, a great desire to speak to you."

"I wish you would say quickly, then, what you have to say," said Harry, ungraciously:

"I do not want to say it quickly, I want to prolong the pleasure. Besides, I would like to continue the conversation about that delightful novel."

"You are very disagreeable!" said Harry, starting up.

"Nay, nay, Miss Harry, do not leave me; this is but a sorry welcome to an old friend," said Mr. Kennett, laying a detaining hand on her arm.

Harry shook it off, and sat down. "Friend!" said she, scornfully. "Do you think I would make a *pretence* of friendship?"

"Then," said he, affecting surprise, "you were not pretending with my friend, the Professor? I shall be jealous of you, Miss Harry; he had a mysterious miniature which I begged him for, but he would not give it to me. Did you prevail on him to give it to you? I know you can be irresistible when you will." He stopped, rather startled by Harry's wrathfully pale face.

"I tell you," said she with considerable excitement, "I never make a *pretence* of friendship. I will not have Mr. Brittain for a friend; he is deluded by you. I will never trust any one who makes a bosom friend of one so devoid of principle, of honor" —

"Miss Harry!" said Mr. Kennett, now turning pale himself, but speaking calmly, "you have made these assertions of my lack of principle and honor so often, that I can no longer pass it by as a young lady's whim; I insist upon an explanation."

"How can you, sir, ask me for an explanation, indeed! I now perceive that you are also devoid of conscience. If I were a man" —

"What have I done to you that you should persist in tormenting me?"

"You have deceived your friend Mr. Brittain, you have deceived my aunt, into the belief that you are a model of propriety; I am not to be deceived."

"I am happy to claim Mrs. Fanning and Mr. Brittain for my friends;" said Mr. Kennett, with some constraint; "they have known me many years, they cannot be deceived in my character."

"They have not had such opportunities of learning your true character as I," said Harry, with a derisive laugh.

"And is it possible," said Mr. Kennett, "that you listen to, and permit yourself to be influenced by idle reports?"

"No!" said Harry, very much exasperated, "I can judge for myself. I would no more listen to any story injurious to any one, than I would read a letter not intended for my eyes."

A light broke upon Mr. Kennett with this speech. "Miss Harry!" cried he, "who told you that I ever did such a thing?"

"Yourself!" said she shortly, indignant to find that he did not quail before the charge.

"Impossible. I never said such a thing."

"You cannot deny it; I heard you myself tell Mrs. Marshall that you read a note of mine in Miss Edna's possession."

To Harry's intense vexation, Mr. Kennett began to laugh. "Were you really in that room after all? Why did you run away?"

"Because I am not like you! Because I never could do so dishonorable a thing as stay and listen. I beg that Mr. Kennett will not judge me by himself." And she drew herself up very stiffly.

"I am very sorry, Miss Harry, for my own sake, that you did not, for once, overstep the bounds of honor; you would then have learned the circumstances under which I read the note. I supposed, when Miss Edna showed it to me, that it was a note to herself, and I knew no better, even after I had read it, until she showed me your name on the back."

Poor Harry sat the picture of confusion during this explanation. "I have done you great injustice; I am shocked to think how unreservedly I have expressed myself about you," said she.

"It was but natural," replied Mr. Kennett kindly. "At your age, and with your ardor I cannot understand how you could have felt otherwise. I was very much provoked with Miss Edna, and she could tell you that I expressed my indignation to herself. But I have never mentioned the circumstance to any one, except Aunt Marshall, and her sense of honor is as keen as your own."

"And I," said Harry, burying her face in her hands, as

was her wont when confused, "I have abused you to every one."

"You have not spared me, certainly," said he lightly. "Poor Sylvo has been entreating me to make my peace with you; our quarrel has quite distressed him. What have you done to him? He seems to think you a very formidable person."

"Harry laughed a little. "He has seen me behave very badly sometimes."

"Did he confide to you the history of that miniature?"

"Why?" asked she.

"He has become so inexplicably incommunicative lately. He will not tell me a word about it, except that he found the owner; did he fall in love with her?" He looked at her sharply, but she only laughed, and said,

"It belonged to Mr. Thorne."

"Oh!" said Mr. Kennett, "I shall have to make Mr. Thorne's acquaintance; what has become of him?"

"I do not know," said Harry.

"Ah! Miss Harry, you have a way of putting people off. What have you been doing to the Professor? Have you been flirting with him?"

"No!" said Harry, with a look of horror. "Of course I would not flirt with Mr. Brittain; I would never think of such a thing."

"You are not in earnest?"

"Yes, I am in earnest. Mr. Brittain has promised to be my friend. What do you think of such a giddy, ignorant creature as I having such a friend? But then you know, I do not think he cares about being my friend, for he has not been near me since I came home. That is not very friendly, is it?"

"No, Miss Harry," said Mr. Kennett gravely, though his eyes danced with merriment. "I do not think he cares at all about being your friend."

"Do you not?" said Harry, with some concern. "Well! I cannot help it, I am sure."

"No, no, Miss Harry, I was joking; you must not take me too seriously. Sylvo will make good his promise I have no doubt."

Harry leaned her head on her hand, and became lost in thought. Mr. Kennett could not induce her to answer his gay speeches, and at last he asked, abruptly, if she were still indignant.

"Oh, no," said Harry, "I was thinking how much I had said against you to him, and how he defended you. But I have said a great many hard things of you, Mr. Kennett."

"Think of them no more," said he; "I shall never remember them."

"But the worst of it is," said Harry, "I never can have the right side of a quarrel; I am always in the wrong."

"Surely you could not have wished to find yourself in the right about this?"

"No, no indeed!" said she, extending her hand with a grace peculiarly her own, "there is not a sadder feeling than to find ourselves deceived in any one we thought highly of."

Mr. Kennett looked at her curiously as he took her hand. He had seen her face assume many varying expressions, but never before had he seen her look so sad. "What can be the matter?" he thought, and he pressed her hand with more warmth than the circumstances required.

"Do you know," said he, "I think our quarrel has lasted long enough? It was time to make friends, and I came this evening expressly to make all satisfactory explanations; for I have something, — something of great interest — to myself — to say to you. I — I believe I cannot be mistaken in — in reposing —. But this is no time, they are rising to leave. When can I see you alone for a few moments?"

"Any time," said Harry; "I am always at home, — that is, when I am not out."

"Exactly," said Mr. Kennett; "but I will see you again; good-night."

"Well Harry, my love," said Mrs. Fanning, when she bade her niece good-night, "how could you possibly endure that odious Mr. Kennett so long? You deserve a premium for amiability."

"But I do not think him odious any longer, aunt, I like him."

"Harry, there is no understanding you," said her aunt; but she was not displeased.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## FOUR-OAKS.



R. KENNETT'S hint of an important communication did not cause Harry to forget the mysterious volume and the two faded letters. As soon as she could, the next morning, she escaped to her room, and bolting the door, drew forth the little red book and took out the letters. She looked at the dates, the one September, the other December of the same year, 1834. They were both written in a feminine hand, though each was different, and neither like her mother's. Taking the earliest one, she glanced over it eagerly, looking first for the signature. "R. B." she read aloud, "who in the world is R. B.?" It was a curious and carefully worded epistle, a perfect enigma, from which Harry could glean nothing, except that somebody was very unhappy, and the person to whom the letter was addressed might return. At the end of the letter was written a date, "Dec. 17," and the words, "too late! too late! woe is me!" in the same hand writing as that in the book. Harry threw it down and snatched at the other.

"They tell me you are married," it read, "why do you not make Four-Oaks your home? The past is gone, why should it disturb you? The present is yours, and I could wish you to be happy." Harry threw it down. "I feel as if I ought not to read this letter," said she; "but stay, let me see what name. Nothing but 'Esthera.' She turned to the book again, and some passages which had escaped her before, she now read with a clearer understanding.

"Why do you not go to Four-Oaks?" said the book. "Harriet is there, and she is so friendly to you, I should think, if you would try, that you could easily please my uncle; will you not try?"



"Four-Oaks! Four-Oaks!" cried Harry, striking her forehead. "And my father stayed at Four-Oaks! Oh! that I must believe this! I must find out how my father came to be staying there. I will find out his poor, unhappy, wronged, deserted love, and how I will love her for her sorrow's sake; and if she is dead, I will plant roses to blossom on her grave."

Immediately she ran to her aunt to learn why her father had stayed at Four-Oaks.

"Aunt Eleanor!" cried she, "what kin are the Fletchers to me?"

Mrs. Fanning was seated in her easy-chair, reading a letter from Mr. Hammond regretting that he could not accept her invitation. She turned, and looking steadily at her niece, said, "Is the child crazy?"

"I thought they were kin to me?" said Harry.

"There are no Fletchers, child; what has possessed you?"

"Nothing, aunt; only one likes to know all about one's kindred."

"And have you not kindred enough without trying to fancy a kinship with nobody knows whom?"

"But why then did my father stay there?"

"Because Mr. Fletcher asked him, I suppose. How did you know he stayed there?"

"Judy told me."

"And did Judy tell you they were kin to you?"

"No, ma'am, but" —

"Then what put such a notion into your head? You have been sitting romancing over that old house until you are dazed; it is time you had some active employment. Go superintend Andrew about that hyacinth bed."

"But only tell me one thing, Aunt Eleanor; did my father ever love anybody before he loved my mother?"

"Harry, you do ask the most unlooked-for questions. I dare say he did; few men or women marry their first loves."

Harry went without another word. "Oh, dear! oh, dear!" she cried, wringing her hands as she walked down the passage, "I *must* believe it. It is plain that Aunt Eleanor could tell me all about it, if she would."

And Harry grew more anxious than ever to visit the old brick house. She seemed to have lost all interest in the

gayeties which had hitherto such a charm for her. She quite forgot Mr. Kennett and his important communication of which he had hinted when she saw him last, and she did not even wonder at his absence. At last her absent, anxious looks attracted her aunt's attention.

"What is the matter, child?" asked she. "You do not look well."

"Oh, Aunt Eleanor! I am tired of so much everlasting company."

"That is very evident," said Mrs. Fanning, kindly, as she smoothed back her hair; "but what is the matter?" Thinking to herself all the while that Mr. Kennett's absence accounted for everything.

"I think I need exercise," said Harry.

"Exercise!" cried Mrs. Fanning.

"Yes, auntie; a good long walk by myself would be so good for me. Please do not have me called down if any one comes."

"Not even to see Mr. Kennett?"

Harry paused a moment, and then completely mystified her aunt by saying,

"I hope he will not call this evening."

"Very well," said Mrs. Fanning. "But if you are going to take any sort of a walk it is time to go, for it is half-past four. Away with you! But stay, Harry; cannot you take this bundle of work to Amy Bayne? You can go down the North Lane, that is a pleasant walk." Adding mentally, "She may meet Mr. Kennett, for he often comes into town that way."

Harry took the bundle very willingly. Running through the now faded orchard at the back of Fanning House, she pushed open the little wicket and found herself in the North Lane. It was a mild October afternoon; from far away there came, like voices in a dream, the call of birds, or the shout of some solitary wanderer in the woods, but no wind to break the downward flutter of the dying leaves. Harry's sadness was not of a kind to steep her to the lips in misery; she had still heart enough and life enough left to enjoy the pleasant autumn evening, and her hands were soon full of the last pale blossoms of the year.

Amy Bayne lived about a quarter of a mile beyond Four-Oaks, so that Harry had to pass the haunted house on her route. Bitter was her disappointment, as she came oppo-

site to it, to find that the overgrown hedges and the thick branches of the trees, completely screened it from her view.

"Oh! if I only had the courage to go in by myself," said she. "How I do wish I had some one with me!"

There was no sign of any living thing about the place except a few pigeons, cooing and strutting about the roof. A superstitious dread came over her, and jumping down from the old stump which she had mounted for the sake of obtaining a better view, she ran quickly away, nor looked back, until she had reached the turning which led to Nick Bayne's cottage.

Her errand to Amy being accomplished, she took a different route home, and going round Four-Oaks, she came out upon the Mainway. Here she had a distinct, though more distant, view of the house which now had for her so mournful an interest.

"The dark link'd ivy, tangling wild,"

had climbed up and covered the whole of the western gable, scarcely sparing even the windows. The eaves were green with moss, which in the fading sunlight, took on a tinge of gold. There was a look of patient decay about the place which went to Harry's very heart. Everything seemed in a dream, in the stillness of that October evening, and she herself was wrapped in a trance, as she stood upon a slight elevation on the Terrace, and gazed at the melancholy prospect. She did not hear Mr. Brittain's approaching footsteps, and when he spoke, she started violently.

What a contrast she offered to the ruin at which she was gazing! The wind had blown her brown hair about her eyes, and called the vivid roses to her cheeks, and the plaid scarf she wore over her dark brown dress was all that was needed to complete as pretty a picture as one could wish to see. The vision called a smile to the lips of the studious man.

"You have not lost your fancy for the haunted house, I see," said he,

"Oh! I am so glad to meet you!" she cried, springing forward and grasping his hand. "I was just beginning to feel ghostly."

"I thought you had a desire to meet a ghost."

"Not by myself," said she, walking on with him. But when they came to the huge gate she stopped, and said,

"I wish we might go in ; I have such a desire to see that old house."

"We can go in," said Mr. Brittain, with his hand on the gate, "but we cannot get into the house."

"Would it be wrong?"

"I think not," answered Mr. Brittain, immensely gratified by this appeal to his judgment."

"Oh! then, do let us go ; I feel brave enough now to meet the ghost. Perhaps he will open the house to us."

They entered, and Harry possessed herself of a stout stick with which she said she meant to arouse the ghost. The leaves were falling silently all around them ; the weeds which grew rank and tall, were fading to a pale and sickly hue, and the sad-looking autumn flowers displayed their blooms amid clumps of withering rose-bushes. Harry stopped to add some golden rod and blue asters to her bouquet, which was already large, while Mr. Brittain surveyed the premises with a critical eye. The porch was low to the ground, and the two sunken stone steps were still damp with the rain that had fallen that morning. One of the stone hounds which guarded the door was half buried in leaves which the wind had heaped up. A half torpid wasp crawled feebly in the sunshine, and, except the pigeons, loudly cooing on the roof, was the only living thing in view. But Harry was too much excited to be sentimental, she raised her stick, and before Mr. Brittain could stop her, gave a thundering rap on the door. Every echo in the old house seemed to awake, and, frightened at the noise, she dropped the stick and looked at her companion. He smiled as the echoes died away, but before she could question him, her ear caught the unmistakable sound of footsteps approaching through the hall. She listened intently for a moment, and as the shuffling sounds drew nearer, her eyes dilated wildly, and in a startled whisper she cried,

"Let us fly!"

But he held her back. A moment more and a hand was at the door, the heavy bolts and bars were undone.

Harry hardly knew what she would seek when she made up her mind to go to Four-Oaks ; some vague idea of finding a manuscript which should explain the one already possessed, did occasionally flit across her mind, but every thought, every feeling faded away in the intense excitement she felt as the door slowly opened and revealed an old, bent

man, with keen, deep-set blue eyes, which gleamed beneath his shaggy brows like lights in a cavern. He was not ill-looking, but queer-looking. He did not manifest the slightest surprise at sight of his visitors, but said immediately, with a quaint hospitality,

"Would you be pleased to enter? 'Tis but gloomy without."

Harry looked at Mr. Brittain, and seeing that he was disposed to accept the invitation, walked in, feeling like one in a dream, or rather like one entering a tomb; for it seemed strange to call the sunshine without *gloomy* in comparison with the dampness, darkness, and chilliness of the ancient mansion.

The old man led the way across a hall but dimly lighted by the sunbeams streaming through the broken panes of glass around the door. The room into which he ushered them was very small, with windows looking to the west, whence could be seen the woods now blazing with the red light of the dying day. The floor was covered with a worn and faded carpet, and every piece of furniture had an ancient, time-eaten look. There was no fire, but only ashes on the hearth, and Harry asked herself, "Is this the ghost?" And looking at the faded carpet and the worn furniture, she said, "This is the ghost."

Mr. Brittain, however, was not so impressed with the supernatural aspect of things, and, mindful of the courtesies of life, he announced his name.

"Brittain!" repeated the old man. "Sylvester Brittain?"

"Yes, sir."

The old man nodded, and in a voice which to Harry seemed terribly threatening, said, "I know you, though it has been a long time."

"And this young lady," said Mr. Brittain, "is Miss Vane."

"Vane? Vane?" said the old man quickly, and scanning her closely, "yes, yes, I know! you are very like your mother."

"This is certainly the ghost," thought Harry, with a tremor.

"And you have been gathering posies in the woods, as she did? Ah! she knew how to beguile the old man."

Harry felt ready to cry.

"What is this?" he continued, stretching out his hand, and touching with his long, skinny finger, a flower in her bouquet.

"Golden rod," she answered, quaking, in spite of herself.

"Solidago! solidago!" said he, looking at her severely. "She knew the names of all flowers and all trees; but all learning is vanity. She is dead, and her learning died with her. But gather flowers while the glamor of youth hides their poison; infelicity comes soon enough to all."

Harry's only comment was a silent one; "a voice from the tomb," she kept repeating to herself.

"Can you sing?" asked the old man, suddenly.

"No," stammered Harry, with perfect truth, for her terror at that moment was too great to admit of her uttering a note.

"She had a tuneful voice and a kindly heart; that was your mother."

At that moment a voice of surpassing sweetness broke forth into song. The sound came from overhead, apparently, but it filled all the lone, empty house, with heavenly melody, so sweet, so sad, that Harry, whose passion was music, felt the tears rise to her eyes.

"Hark!" said the old man, raising his hand, which he never lowered until the song had ceased.

Harry almost gasped. "Is that a spirit singing?" she thought.

As if in answer, "It is the child," said the old man, when the voice had ceased. "I will go for her." And he shuffled off, leaving them alone in the room.

"Who is he?" said Harry, trembling and creeping closer to Mr. Brittain.

"Mr. Fletcher," said Mr. Brittain.

"You do not believe it?" said she, incredulously.

"Certainly," he replied; "it can be no one else."

Harry clasped her hands to her head. "I shall go mad!" she thought.

But presently Mr. Fletcher returned, bearing in his hands a bunch of white chrysanthemums, the finest Harry had ever seen.

"Flowers from the Spirit Land," thought she.

"The glories of the garden have dwined away," said Mr. Fletcher; "these alone remain; they are redolent of au-

tumn." But he had scarcely finished this speech, when a vision behind him caught Harry's enraptured gaze. A young girl, beautiful as the dawn, with golden hair and deep blue eyes, stood hesitating on the threshold. She was not arrayed in flowing robes of white, nor had she wings upon her shoulders, but, as she stood there in her gray dress and linen collar she was none the less welcome to Harry's eyes.

"I have found her! I have found her!" she cried, springing toward the girl. "This is Marcia, this is my beautiful stranger, Mr. Brittain." And in her enthusiasm she threw her arms around Marcia and kissed her.

Mr. Brittain uttered an exclamation of surprise, and Mr. Fletcher stared in bewilderment, until Marcia, recovering from her embarrassment, was able to explain Harry's incoherent phrases. The terror of the supernatural had departed from Miss Vane. She looked and saw that Mr. Fletcher was a man of flesh and blood; limited flesh and blood, it was true, but still, not a disembodied spirit. Her eyes, now accustomed to the gloom, beheld in the recess at the other side of the room, numerous glass cases filed with stuffed birds, from the plainest little linnets to the most gorgeous of parrots and macaws, while monkeys and squirrels were fixed above in close proximity to jars of alcohol, wherein were preserved innumerable hideous reptiles.

"I tried to see you," said Harry, holding the hand of her new-found friend. "We went to Mr. Sammons', but you were gone. I feared I should see you no more."

Marcia was not impulsive like Harry, but it was impossible to resist the friendship so warmly offered.

"I have not forgotten, you see," said Harry; "I hope we shall be friends. Shall we not be friends?"

"I should be very glad," said Marcia, hesitating and looking at her father; "I have no friends, no young friends."

"But you did not always live here?" said Harry.

"We have been here but a few days," said Marcia.

"It is such an adventure!" cried Harry. "I am so glad of it, for I always did have such a fancy for this strange old house; my father used to stay here."

"And your mother, too," said Mr. Fletcher, "used to be here a great deal."

Harry's heart instantly sank like lead. She fancied that

there was something severely significant in this remark, and it was with a very pleading tone that she asked,

"May I not come to see you soon, and often? I hope we may be good friends."

"You are very gracious," said Mr. Fletcher.

"But indeed I am sincere," said poor Harry, under the impression that Mr. Fletcher mistrusted her.

"Miss Vane," said Mr. Brittain, "I am sorry to interrupt an interview which seems to give you so much pleasure, but it is growing late."

"Yes," said Harry, "and Aunt Eleanor will be uneasy, for I started out alone. So good-by, Mr. Fletcher," she said, extending her little hand. Then turning to kiss Marcia, she said again that she would come soon to see her and that her aunt would come with her.

Mr. Fletcher opened the door for them and watched them until they had passed the shadow of the three remaining oaks.

The full moon was shining through the trees around St. Botolf's when Harry and Mr. Brittain found themselves once more on the Terrace. She was full of excitement, and talked incessantly, but the visit seemed to have rendered him unusually taciturn.

"Now was not our adventure unusually romantic? Do you know I positively believed him to be a ghost until I saw Marcia? Is she not beautiful? How did it happen that you were not afraid? Did you know that there was some one living there?"

"Not positively; but I observed some signs of habitation which you were too much excited to notice. The chain was off the gate, and the walk had been cleared out and the shrubbery pruned."

"And how could you take me there, then?"

"I had a great curiosity to see what you would do," said he, smiling and hesitating a little. "Are you offended?"

"Not in the least, not in the least! I have been delighted. But he spoke as if he knew you; where did you ever see him before? At the Springs?"

"No; at Four-Oaks."

"At Four-Oaks! Why, who is he? Not old Anthony Fletcher?"

"Certainly not; but Anthony Fletcher's nephew."



"What an old man!"

"Mr. Fletcher seems older than he is; I do not think he is much older than your father."

"Did you ever see my father?" said Harry, eagerly.

"Often."

"Oh! yes; of course you must; how stupid of me! But you must have known my mother, too; why did you never tell me anything about her?"

Now the remembrance of Harriet Fanning had been to Mr. Brittain more a source of pain than of pleasure since he had known her daughter. He was not more than thirteen or fourteen years older than Harry, but the marked respect with which she treated him made the difference seem greater. He would hardly have known how to parry the gay, familiar sallies with which she met Mr. Dunbar, Mr. Paul, and others, but he would have been better pleased to dispense with a little of the respect, for the sake of contracting the distance between them. He had not conceit nor experience enough to interpret this respectful treatment in his own favor, and he did not reflect that Mr. Dunbar, with nearly double his years, could not command any other treatment than what she thought good enough for her youngest admirers.

"I was a boy of nine or ten," said he, "and your mother was a young lady, at that time engaged to your father. She was very beautiful and very kind-hearted. Old Anthony Fletcher was very fond of her, for she was very kind to him, and she could do what she pleased with him. The boys used to annoy the old gentleman very much, but whenever they put him in a passion, she would coax him to forgive us, and often to give us some of his choice fruits. But afterwards, she would lecture us! She has followed us out of the garden many times, and scolded us most eloquently. The poor old man was easily irritated, and we used to worry him a great deal."

"What kin was he to my father?" asked Harry, abruptly.

"None whatever."

"Yes, but he was, though," said she, positively.

"Oh, no;" said Mr. Brittain, with some surprise.

"Why do you ask?"

"Why did my father stay there, then?"

"I have heard," said Mr. Brittain, "that his health was not good at that time, and old Mr. Fletcher had some skill

as a homœopathist, which was then an almost unknown thing in this part of the world. But I believe," he added, "your mother had more to do with his recovery than all Mr. Fletcher's little pills."

Poor Harry! here was a confirmation of all her fears.

"He took a sea-voyage," continued Mr. Brittain, "and soon after his return married your mother."

"Yes! yes! I know," said Harry, almost with a groan; "they ran away." And she thought to herself. "They did not tell me truly when they said she ran away to avoid the fussy celebration." Then she asked aloud,

"But who else stayed there, what other young ladies? Had Mr. Fletcher no daughters?"

"He was a bachelor; this Mr. Fletcher was his adopted son, but he was with him very little, and there never were any young ladies there."

"Yes, but there was one," said Harry; "her name was — Oh! there is Mr. Kennett; I wonder if he has been to see me."

"Good evening, Miss Harry," cried that gentleman, reining in his dashing steeds. "Good evening, Sylvo. Miss Harry I have just been to Fanning House to tell you that important secret I hinted of in my last visit."

That part of the Terrace upon which Harry and Mr. Brittain stood was considerably higher than the street, and Harry, looking down upon Mr. Kennett, sitting in his buggy, begged him to come up, that she had something important to say to him also.

"There is no understanding girls," thought Mr. Brittain, "The last time I heard her mention Ralph's name it was with the utmost indignation and contempt, and now she is as gracious as can be! My mother must be right — she is a deceitful coquette."

But Harry, totally oblivious of the abuse Mr. Brittain had once heard her bestow upon his friend, held out her hand to Mr. Kennett as he ascended the bank, and began an animated account of her "adventure," only interrupting herself at the outset, to bid Hamp, Mr. Kennett's tiger, drive back to Fanning House.

"For you will go home with me?" added she, "will you not?"

"Certainly," returned Mr. Kennett.

Mr. Brittain made a motion to retire.

"Do not go!" said Harry. "Why do you want to leave me? Mr. Kennett and I are excellent friends, now; are we not, Mr. Kennett? Besides, Mr. Brittain, I am about to relate a marvellous tale, and I shall need you as a witness."

"Oh! stay by all means, Sylvo," said Mr. Kennett; "you can help her out when invention fails."

So Mr. Brittain stayed, and Harry made them sit down on one of the benches under the trees, while she told her strange story of the discovery of Marcia.

Mr. Kennett listened with an absorbing interest, which inspired Harry, and when she had finished, he seized her hands and cried,

"That is what I wanted to tell you, myself! I came in town this evening to ask you to go with me to visit Miss Fletcher." And then Mr. Kennett told his tale; how he had long been negotiating for the purchase of Four-Oaks, how Mr. Fletcher had changed his mind often enough to shake the determination of any less patient, or less obstinate man than himself, and how finally he had declined altogether. How at last he, Mr. Kennett, had met him most unexpectedly in the mountains, while travelling the past summer. How he had renewed his efforts to purchase Four-Oaks, how the same indecision still characterized Mr. Fletcher, but how little he cared, so long as he could find an excuse for enjoying the society of his beautiful daughter. Mr. Fletcher and his daughter suddenly disappeared one day from the place where they were boarding, and none could tell whither they had gone. "Upon my return home I learned from Hollis, Mr. Fletcher's agent, that they would come to Four-Oaks to live. Lou and I have had quite a dispute; I cannot prevail upon her to call on Miss Fletcher, so I want you to ask your aunt to call."

"Indeed I will," said Harry. "She is the most beautiful creature I ever saw; is she not beautiful, Mr. Brittain?"

"Very," replied he, absently.

"I have fallen in love with her myself," continued she gayly, nodding her head to Mr. Kennett, "and I shall visit her on my own account, so you need not flatter yourself, sir, that I shall go there on yours."


"There is no understanding that girl," thought Mr. Brittain.

“It is time now for you to see me home,” continued Miss Harry. “Mr. Brittain, I fancy, has lost his heart, also, but do not you let me fall off this Terrace and break my neck. I never should have stayed out so late,” she rattled on as they turned the corner, “if I had remembered the name and fatality of this walk. I knew nothing about it until a few days ago, Grace Innibee told me. It is fortunate for you, or for me, that you have both seen Miss Fletcher, or who knows what might have happened, if” — and she finished with a laugh.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### HENRY VIII.

Y dearest child!” exclaimed Mrs. Fanning, as Harry came running up the steps with Mr. Brittain and Mr. Kennett. “Where have you been staying so late? Good evening Mr. Brittain; Mr. Kennett you surely could not have delivered my message?”

Mr. Kennett gave a little start. “My dear madam,” said he, “I beg a thousand pardons! Miss Harry will tell you, that she has had an adventure, and I quite forgot your message.”

“An adventure, Harry? I hope, my dear, you have not hurt yourself?”

“Oh! no indeed! I’ve seen a ghost!” cried Harry excitedly. “Do let me tell you, auntie.”

“No, no,” said Mrs. Fanning, “leading the way to the parlor; “I have neither time nor fancy for ghost-stories now, and since Mr Kennett has been so forgetful, I must announce the arrival of your cousin, Frank Middleton.”

“Middleton!” said Harry, “I did not know that I had any cousins named Middleton.”

“Cousin by courtesy, Harry; he is the brother of your

cousin Margaret's husband. He will pay us a long visit, so my dear I hope you will make yourself agreeable."

"Yes ma'am," said Harry dutifully, and Mr. Brittain sighed to himself as he wondered what manner of man this was who would stay so long, and to whom Miss Vane would be so agreeable.

Mr. Middleton's entrance soon disclosed what manner of man he was, so far as could be learned from outward appearance. He was rather small, with light hair inclined to curl, hard blue eyes, and a rather conceited, and not very amiable countenance; yet he had evidently won Mrs. Fanning's favor.

He was introduced first to Miss Vane, whom he addressed as "Harry," and as soon as he had shaken hands with the gentlemen, after a short scrutiny of the pretty, blushing girl before him, he turned to her aunt, and said,

"I fancy you are mistaken by a quarter of an inch; she is nearer five feet four and three quarters than five feet five." Then turning to Harry, he continued, "Your aunt has been telling me that she supposes you to be five feet five in height, but I cannot agree with her. My eye never deceives me, and I pronounce you to be five feet four and three quarters; am I not right?"

"I do not know," said Harry.

"Really, I should like very much to ascertain," said Mr. Middleton. "Mrs. Fanning may I not be allowed? A tape-measure, or a yardstick, if you please. I should really like, for my own satisfaction, to prove the correctness of my eye."

"Certainly," said Mrs. Fanning, and she ordered the yardstick to be brought.

"Thank you!" said Mr. Middleton, pompously, as he took the stick from Jackson's hands. "Now Harry, if you will just stand in the doorway here. I promise you, Mrs. Fanning, I shall only make the most infinitesimal, invisible mark."

Harry rose and stood in the desired position by the door, and Mr. Middleton, having made a mark with his finger-nail, permitted her to retire to her seat.

"Exactly as I supposed!" cried he, triumphantly, advancing into the middle of the room. "My eye never deceives me. Five feet four and three quarters!" And he began talking about his correct eye to Mr. Fanning, who

had just come in. But Mr. Brittain was more interested in the remark Harry made in a low tone to Mr. Kennett, as she took her seat, —

“I tip-toed. He has taken my measure, and I have taken his. I am so glad he is here; I shall have a world of fun.”

“Come, come in to tea;” said Mrs. Fanning, “you shall tell the height of each of us afterwards.”

“When they were seated at the table, something being said about amusements in Netherford, —

“Pray, Mr. Brittain,” said she, “What have you been doing for the Quodlibet?”

“I, madam?” said Mr. Brittain, “I fear I am a very inefficient member. I am a regular attendant, purely from the want of some excitement, but I rarely contribute anything.”

“What is that,” asked Mr. Middleton, “a Literary Society?”

“Yes,” replied Mrs. Fanning.

“Oh! you ought to get up some Shakespearean readings; they are all the go now,” said Mr. Middleton.

“I have done my duty in that respect,” said Mrs. Fanning. “I have made every exertion to obtain Mr. Hammond, but I have been disappointed he cannot come.”

“What, Hammond the Englishman?” said Mr. Middleton.

“Yes, have you ever heard him? Do you not think him a fine reader?”

“Not particularly,” said Mr. Middleton, helping himself to a muffin; “his emphasis is often faulty.”

“I heard him in a private circle in Havana last winter,” said Mrs. Fanning, somewhat piqued; “I may be no judge, but there were others beside myself who were highly pleased.”

“Oh! of course,” said Mr. Middleton; “but those who have made the thing a study are more apt to detect faults.”

“Perhaps,” said Mr. Kennett, “Mr. Middleton is a reader.”

“I was considered a very good reader in our Literary Club in Charleston last winter,” said Mr. Middleton, with a bow.

“Then Eleanor,” said Mr. Fanning, “you can substitute Frank there for your Mr. Hammond. I must say the exchange will be quite satisfactory to me.”

"Indeed I shall!" exclaimed Mrs. Fanning, "I am delighted! I shall send out invitations to the Quodlibet for the day after to-morrow; Mr. Middleton, I am sure, will consent to read for us?"

"With pleasure, madam."

"And now gentlemen," continued Mrs. Fanning, rising, "let us adjourn to the parlor, and if Mr. Middleton is not too much fatigued, perhaps he will gratify us by reading a little this evening?"

Mr. Middleton consented unhesitatingly, and as they entered the parlor Mrs. Fanning wheeled forward a great arm-chair, saying,—

"Here is the seat of honor, and allow me to say, Mr. Middleton, that you could not have more appreciative listeners than Mr. Brittain and Mr. Kennett."

Mr. Middleton sat down.

"Shall I bring you Shakespeare?" asked Mrs. Fanning.

"Really, my dear madam, if you will allow me, I must plead fatigue. I would prefer simply to recite some short poem."

"Oh, certainly," said Mrs. Fanning; "we will not be too exacting."

"I will give you the Skeleton in Armor," said Mr. Middleton; "it is a striking piece, and capable of great effect if properly managed."

Running his fingers through his hair, and assuming a tragic expression, he began in a deep and hollow voice, making at the same time a warning gesture with his right hand,

"Speak! speak! thou fearful guest!  
Who, with thy hollow breast,  
Still in rude armor drest,  
Comest to daunt me!"

He really did it very well, despite some affectation, and his audience expressed their satisfaction, each after his own fashion. Mrs. Fanning was enthusiastic in her praise. Mr. Hammond himself, she said, could not have done better. Mr. Middleton hardly thought he could have done so well. Mr. Brittain and Mr. Kennett expressed themselves pleased, and Harry, turning her pretty head slightly away, and stretching forth her hands with a gesture of prohibition, said, in a voice so exactly resembling Mr. Middleton's that Mr. Brittain smiled, and Mr. Kennett started,—

"Cease! cease! thou fearful guest!  
Thou'lt break my good night's rest!"

"Why Harry?" said her aunt, severely.

But Mr. Middleton, to every one's surprise, instead of showing any displeasure, turned to her, and said, —

"You have quite a talent for elocution, I should judge. Your voice seems to have vast compass. I should like to train you; I could soon make a reader of you."

"Well," said Harry, "I will learn."

"Now, Mr. Middleton," said Mrs. Fanning, "it will not do to trespass too far upon your good-nature; we will not trouble you for another poem to-night, but while Mr. Brittain and Mr. Kennett are here, let us select something for the Quodlibet. Here is Shakespeare; come gentlemen, what do you suggest?"

"Hamlet," proposed Mr. Brittain, but before he could finish what he had begun to say Mr. Middleton, interrupted, —

"Oh! Hamlet is so hackneyed!"

"Macbeth?" said Mr. Kennett.

"And Macbeth," said Mr. Middleton, firtling the leaves of the book, "is seldom appreciated."

"Please tell me," said Harry, "which one of them was it who said 'to be or not to be?'"

Mr. Middleton opened his stony blue eyes very wide, Mr. Kennett laughed, and Mrs. Fanning said sharply, —

"Harry; I am ashamed of you; Mr. Brittain will be shocked!"

"Oh no!" said Harry, carelessly, "I told him long ago that I hated books; he expects no better from me."

"Suppose we have something from Lear?" said Mr. Fanning, "That is not hackneyed, and everybody appreciates it."

"Oh! I don't like Lear!" said Mr. Middleton. "I propose now, that we have the trial of Queen Katharine in Henry VIII; it is a scene which never fails to please."

"Please tell me," said Harry, laying her hand on Mr. Kennett's arm, "did Henry VIII have nine, or ten wives? And what was Katharine's trial about?"

"Harry," said Mrs. Fanning, who overheard the question, "I will not suffer you to betray your ignorance in that way. I am mortified; I shall shut you up all day to-morrow on bread and water, and insist upon your learning some-



thing about Henry VIII before the meeting of the Quodlibet."

"You need not think, Mr. Brittain," said Mr. Fanning, that that child is as ignorant as she pretends. I found her in the Library the other day poring over Hume, and she said she wanted to find out which of his wives old Harry loved the best."

Harry laughed. "But I never read Shakespeare's Henry VIII," said she; "so I shall do as Aunt Eleanor bids; I will live on bread and water, and read it faithfully, and you shall see, Mr. Brittain, and Mr. Kennett, how well I will know it. Come early, and I will show you."

Mr. Middleton's great night arrived. Not a cloud obscured the sky, and the full moon shone with all the brilliancy Mrs. Fanning could have desired. It was yet too early for the guests to assemble, but Mr. Kennett was entreating Mr. Brittain to start at once; he wished, he said, to see Harry, if possible, before any of the company arrived. Mr. Brittain was in his room arranging his toilette with the same nervous care he had evinced weeks before at the Springs.

"That will do! That will do!" cried Mr. Kennett, impatiently. "You are not to be married to night; let us be off!"

"Go by yourself, if you are in such a hurry," said Mr. Brittain; "it may be more agreeable to you to see Miss Vane alone. She is a charming little girl, Ralph, I admire your taste," he added, with some effort.

"So I see," said his friend, dryly; "and you perhaps desire her to admire yours; I should think so from the variety of vests and cravats you have tried on since I came in."

Mr. Brittain reddened, tied his cravat with a jerk, finished dressing in a hurry, and turning to his friend, said with some embarrassment, —

"I am ready to go, but I promise you I shall not stand in your way. Only, Ralph, let me tell you one thing, if Miss Vane really likes you, remember she is very young. They say you are something of a flirt; do not try it with her."

Mr. Kennett burst into a laugh. "Sylvo, you are a very learned man;" said he; "but Miss Vane is a person of deeper penetration. You have known me all my life, and she but a few months; you have heard as much from me as she

has, yet she could tell you more about me than you have ever discovered. But *they say*, to use Grace Innibee's convenient phrase, that Miss Vane is a flirt; probably the same person told me that who informed you of my propensity to trifle with hearts; — do not let her flirt with you, I beg. However, about her flirting, I know nothing; all I can say is that she is a most delightful little creature. What sort of a lady-love she will make I leave for you to find out."

Jackson was just lighting the parlor lamps as the two friends mounted the steps of the Fanning House. The opening of the hall door revealed to them the lady of their search. She was standing half way up the stair, just under the blaze of the great hall lamp, which showed her dark blue silk to great advantage. Her face was turned upward, as though listening to some one on the landing above. One hand rested on the railing, the other held up her silken robes, showing a slippered foot suspended in the act of stepping down. The white chrysanthemums, which Mr. Fletcher had gathered from his ruined garden, gleamed in her dark brown hair. To both the friends she appeared an object to be admired; perfect in dress, exquisite in grace. Mr. Kennett regarded her with the same sort of pleasure he would have felt in looking at a beautiful picture, but to Mr. Britain she seemed like the vision of an excited fancy. She scarcely seemed real to him, even when she saw them, and sprang lightly down the steps to meet them.

"How do you do?" she cried; "I really did not think you cared enough about me to come early, as I invited you to do."

"You remember," said Mr. Kennett, "that I was to have convincing proof of your having studied well during the last two days; what have you done all that time?"

"All the whole time I was my chamber's prisoner," said she, in a theatrical voice and manner.

"Prison fare agrees with you," said Mr. Kennett.

"Oh;" cried she, her whole face aglow with merriment, "You know the old proverb, 'laugh and grow fat'? And I never laughed, I think, any day in my life, as I did to-day. He has been practising all day, and I sat on the stairs listening to him, and I laughed until I had to run away. I counted all his tones, and named them. He has five, five different voices that he can put off and on as he does his fancy cravats. I have named them so accurately that when you hear

to-night you will be sure to recognize them." Only listen;" and she began counting on her fingers. "There is the Thunder Growl, the Ecclesiastical Rumble, the Bravo, the Royal Medium and the Superfine."

All this fun which made Mr. Kennett laugh so heartily, only made poor Mr. Brittain sigh. What availed it that Ralph had given him full permission to fall in love with Miss Vane? Could he guaranty that Miss Vane would fall in love with him? Alas! he could only deplore his fatal fancy! he felt as a man might feel who should find himself in love with a Faery Queen. Indeed was there not something of elfish spite in this making fun of a guest? He almost felt that he was wrong to stand there and listen.

Mr. Kennett was troubled with no such scruples. "Go on," he said, when Harry stopped, checked by the "poky old Professor's" grave face. "Give us an example, if you please, Miss Harry."

A stifled laugh at the other end of the hall made Harry look round, and there stood all the dusky retinue of Fanning House, Aunt Judy at their head, rejoicing in the good days that were come again.

"Not here, not here," said Harry. "Come into the parlor and I will show you. Here, Mr. Kennett, sit you here while I make my speech; Mr. Brittain you can look on and admire."

Alas! poor fellow, it was what he was doing all the time. And who could help admiring her then? Her face was beaming; her eyes danced and sparkled; she seemed possessed with the very spirit of happy fun.

Ere her audience could divine what she would do, she threw herself gracefully and impetuously upon her knees before Mr. Kennett, and raising her clasped hands, began in a musical but studied voice, a ludicrous plea for permission to enjoy herself—

"May it please Your Majesty!  
There is to be much people here to-night,  
And I, a silly, and mischief-loving girl  
Am much reprov'd if I do but show a harmless smile,  
In this grave company no man dare say,  
'Mirth I mean with thee to dwell!' Yet I  
Would crave the gracious boon  
To sit somewhat apart, to smile,  
Perchance to laugh aloud, at this grave farce  
Enacted here to-night!"

Mr. Kennett entered fully into the fun. "Come away

from behind my chair, 'Sylvo,' said he, "and look at me now. Ahem!

If I do chide, most merry maiden,  
Deem not"—

Here Mr. Fanning entered, and Harry sprang to her feet, turning slightly pale.

"What is all this?" said Mr. Fanning, laughing.

"Oh! do not tell my aunt! pray do not tell my aunt," said Harry, shrinking behind Mr. Kennett's chair.

Mrs. Fanning entered immediately, looking very handsome in her stiff black silk, and dainty lace cap, trimmed with flame-colored ribbons.

"Jackson," said she to the servant who followed her, "there is a carriage at the door; turn up those lamps, quick! And send Tom up to Mr. Middleton. Oh! Selina," she continued, advancing to meet Miss Dalrymple, "I am glad to see you! And you brought your work?"

"Yes," said Miss Dalrymple, "I am so fearful that I shall not have time to finish that I go nowhere without it." And she ensconced herself in a sofa-corner near the lamps, pulled out her twisted stripe, and knitted indefatigably.

The Innibees came next, and were soon followed by others in quick succession. Every one was in raptures about the treat in store for them. Mr. Middleton came down, and was introduced to all, while poor Mr. Brittain stood apart in painful contemplation of the charming and beautiful little actress who welcomed each fresh arrival with the most bewitching grace. Miss Edna and Blanche entered among the last, Miss Edna in a plum-colored silk with a sprig of arbor-vitæ sticking stiffly in her hair. Harry laughed at sight of it, and Mr. Brittain heard her say merrily to Mr. Kennett,—

"Oh! look, look! do look! the tree of knowledge!"

"She is incorrigible," thought Mr. Brittain with a sigh, while Mr. Kennett laughed unrestrainedly.

Miss Edna passed by, and greeted Harry very coldly, but Blanche offered a kiss, which was not refused.

"Where is Richard? Why did he not come?" asked Harry.

"Oh!" said Blanche, with a little toss of the head, "Richard, I can assure you, had no desire to come. He is studying very hard, and Aunt Edna says he will be a famous man yet."

"I have no doubt of it," said Harry, calmly.

Blanche thrust her hand into her pocket and drew forth a very red apple.

"Davy worried me to bring you this," said she, handing it to Harry. "He says you ought to come to see him."

"Dear little Davy!" said Harry, as she took the apple, "I thought he had forgotten me!"

Mr. Brittain was astonished to see, as she turned toward him, that her eyes were full of tears. "I thought," she said to him, "that none of them cared about me, but I had forgotten Davy, and he remembered me." And she transferred his childish gift to the pocket of her dress. Mr. Brittain was more pained than pleased by this little revelation of feeling. "Why," said he to himself, "why must she have one endearing trait, when she has so many that forbid me ever to think of her? And I will think of her, I will see her, no more, from this time forth." Yet he mechanically followed her to the music-stand, whither she had been called by Mr. Sutton, who wished to find out the song of the Standard Bearer. The notes were found and placed upon the piano.

"Really, Miss Grace," Mr. Sutton said, "I am somewhat hoarse, and so out of practice that I ought not to permit myself to sing that song. But if you insist, here goes!" And he shouted forth the song with emphasis.

"Oh! charming! splendid! magnificent!" exclaimed Miss Grace.

"That is a very fine song," said Mr. Middleton, stepping up to the piano; "but you would improve it if you could manage to infuse into it a little more of military ardor and enthusiasm."

This criticism, so coolly delivered, caused Mr. Sutton to spring quickly from his seat, at the piano, and confront the Lion with an indignant stare. Mr. Middleton was not at all disconcerted thereby; he continued,

"Expression is, you know, ladies, the soul of music; but it must be a characteristic expression. Allow me to illustrate." And he took possession of the vacated seat at the piano and sang Kathleen Mavourneen in a manner that quite eclipsed poor Mr. Sutton, who sulked in a corner for the rest of the evening. Miss Grace overwhelmed the new star with extravagant praise and importunate entreaty to sing "just one song more."

But Mr. Middleton was not to be persuaded. "Really, ladies, you must bear in mind that I am to use my voice for your amusement in another way to-night. You really must spare me; some other time."

And having shown that he could do so much better than Mr. Sutton, he walked away.

"Miss Vane," said Mr. Brittain, "I wish you would sing one song for me?"

Now Mr. Brittain's grave, almost sad face, had within the last hour made a far deeper impression upon Harry than he would ever have imagined. Why should he look so sad and so grave? And no other solution occurred to her than the very romantic one that he must have loved some one who slumbered with the dead, or worse still, who loved him no more. She remembered the conversation at Bennet's Pool, when he said he had abandoned the hope of having 'a wife of his youth.' Surely, regret for the forgotten, unreturning Past overshadowed all the Present and the Future for him. Immediately he became to her a hero of romance. Every time she looked at him her heart trembled at the thought of what he must have suffered. She would have done anything for his pleasure, so when he asked for a song, she complied promptly, asking him, as she took her seat, what he would have?

"Bonnie Doon," said he.

Some of the young ladies around the piano were inclined to smile at his old-fashioned choice, but to Harry it was a confirmation of her surmises. Perhaps she whom he loved had sung it for him long ago. Her whole heart was in the plaintive song which she poured forth with such abandonment of sad despair, that she almost brought tears to the eyes of her hearers.

"That song," thought Mr. Brittain, "first attracted me to her. No one can be devoid of heart who sings like that." But he thanked her only with a look.

When Harry rose from the piano she observed that the guests had quietly subsided into seats; an effect not altogether due to her song, for there sat Mr. Middleton at a rout table, a huge silver candlestick on either side of him, and Shakespeare opened before him.

Harry slid into a corner behind a table, between Mr. Brittain and Mr. Kennett, her interest in the Professor entirely forgotten in her extreme amusement at Mr. Middleton.

“Ladies and gentlemen!” began that important individual as soon as the room was hushed to a profound silence, “the scene selected for your amusement to-night is the celebrated trial of Queen Katharine in Shakespeare’s drama of Henry VIII. Doubtless it is familiar to all of you, yet a fine scene, like a fine song, ‘time cannot wither nor custom stale.’ ‘Such noble scenes as draw the eyes to flow we now present.’ Yet I will explain beforehand, that for the sake of producing a greater effect, I shall take the liberty of altering the scene somewhat, an alteration which much enhances the effect, as you must all allow.”

Then beginning at Act 2, Scene IV, he read the description of the Court assembled in the Hall in Blackfriars in an off-hand, business-like manner. Then with the voice Harry had called the “Ecclesiastical Rumble,” he read Wolsey’s speech, exactly as printed until he came to the Queen. As he called “Katharine, Queen of England, come into court,” whether because he wished to make a great impression upon Harry, or whether he did it unconsciously, he looked sternly at her.

Harry blushed, cast down her eyes, and said in a voice only audible to Mr. Kennett and Mr. Brittain,

“Excuse me, sir, I prefer to remain where I am.”

Mr. Kennett said softly, “Well done, Miss Harry,” and even Mr. Brittain smiled.

Mr. Middleton’s alteration consisted in calling the Queen several times over, and in interpolating the words,

“*Scribe.* She does not come, call her again.”

Again was Katharine called into Court, and again did Mr. Middleton bend his threatening gaze upon Harry.

“I shan’t do it,” said she, softly, from her corner.

“What is to be the end of all this?” thought Mr. Brittain, feeling very much like a good boy who had fallen into bad company.

But Mr. Middleton did not hear; in blissful ignorance he read on,

“‘*King Henry.* It is our pleasure that she come into Court; call her again.”

“‘*Crier.* Katharine, Queen of England, come into Court,’” looking at Harry.

“I sha’n’t stir a step, may it please your ugly old Majesty,” said Harry, to Mr. Kennett’s infinite amusement; “so you may hush your calling.”

The calling ceased. Mr. Middleton took up the scene at Queen Katherine's speech to the King, and read on to the end with every variety of modulation. Immense applause followed, and the Lion was entreated for something more, something comic, something pathetic; and as his practice had been great he was able to gratify all tastes. He kept on repeating poetry, to the great delight of his audience, until the refreshments appeared.

As soon as Mr. Dunbar espied the tray of edibles, he heaped up a plate and made his way to the corner where sat Harry with Mr. Brittain and Mr. Kennett. She had no desire to talk to Mr. Dunbar, and so, proposing to Mr. Brittain, to move to a more commodious table, she left him to the tender mercies of Mr. Kennett.

"Look here, Ralph, said the antiquated beau, "what sort of an actor fellow is this here? I am astonished that Mrs. Fanning should be willing to expose her niece to the contamination of his society, for she knows I warned her that Miss Vane entertained the idea of going on the stage."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Kennett, gravely, "she sees it is useless to contend against it, and this Mr. Middleton may be an advantage to her."

"It is a disgrace!" said Mr. Dunbar. "Why should she do so foolish a thing? Do you know I once had a notion to marry her myself, but she has the temper of a dev—hem! savage. She got her hand mashed at the Springs, and you would have thought by her actions that she was all but killed, but it never mashed the temper out of her. I was recommending a most excellent poultice to her, that was a certain cure, and she snapped me up in short order. I haven't thought seriously of marrying her since. But what would you advise me to do now?"

"Oh! marry her, by all means," said Mr. Kennett; "if you can get her to marry you."

"Well! between you and me, that won't be so hard to do. You see I'm a good-looking fellow for my age, and you can see that she takes pretty kindly to your friend Sylvio, and he is enough to bore her to death with his learning. Now I could not bore her that way, you know? Besides she is worth the winning, he has quite a pretty fortune. You see I could put up with her ways till the knot was tied; women must be humored you know; afterwards she'd find that I was master."



"Well," said Mr. Kennett, "I advise you to try." And he smiled to himself as he thought of Mr. Dunbar proposing to Harry.

"What did you think of my alteration? Was it an improvement?" said Mr. Middleton, coming up to them.

Mr. Dunbar drew himself up with dignity, and walked away.

"A very decided improvement," replied Mr. Kennett; "you could not imagine, unless you had heard it from my position, how very greatly the scene gained by it."

Mr. Middleton looked gratified. He linked his arm in that of his adroit flatterer and strolled round the room with him. But Mr. Kennett was more inclined to linger near the spot where Harry was entertaining Mr. Brittain and Mr. Dunbar, than to listen to Mr. Middleton's egotistical talk. He disengaged himself and took a seat upon an ottoman just as Mr. Dunbar was promising Harry a bushel basket of apples.

"I have had one beauty of an apple, worth a whole basket full, sent me this evening," said Harry, drawing forth Davy's little present, and playfully tossing it in the air.

"Who from?" said Mr. Dunbar.

"A young gentleman whose name begins with D," said Harry, look very arch.

Mr. Dunbar was puzzled, and so indeed was Mr. Kennett.

"I—I—don't understand," stammered Mr. Dunbar, "I never sent that apple."

"Oh! I know that," said Harry, "I did not mean to imply that you did."

"But, Miss Harry, I think you might give it to me when I am going to send you so many."

"No," said Harry, "I think too much of the giver to part with it."

"I'll give you anything for it," said Mr. Dunbar.

"Your white horse?"

"Ye—es," said he, after a visible struggle.

"I believe I will not trade," said Harry.

"Give it to me, Miss Harry," said Mr. Kennett, "and I will tell you a secret worth knowing."

"Plenty of red apples grow at Four-Oaks," said she with a smile, and Mr. Kennett actually blushed.

Something emboldened Mr. Brittain to ask for it, too.

"Give it to me, Miss Vaue, for friendship's sake," he said.

Harry ceased tossing up her apple and paused. Her vivid fancy carried her swiftly back to the time when she thought he might have loved some blooming girl, and sent her apples; perhaps he asked it now for the memory of that happy time.

"I am sorry," she said slowly; "I would give it to you, but I cannot slight the gift of my poor little lover. If I had another, I would give it to you."

"Lover!" said Mr. Dunbar. "You acknowledge it was a lover?"

"Yes! Why may not I have a lover; half a dozen?"

"Miss Harry, these young men are all gay deceivers," said Mr. Dunbar, solemnly.

"Are they?" said Harry, innocently.

"Indeed they are. No girl ought to trust her affections to any but a man of mature years."

"How degenerate the world is," said Harry; "there are so few who do that."

"Miss Harry will be a nice old maid," said Mr. Kennett.

"Are you going to be an old bachelor," said Harry, "and forget all about blue eyes and golden hair?"

"You have not got blue eyes and golden hair," said Mr. Dunbar, with so ludicrous an emphasis that they all laughed.

"Have not you forgotten all about that yourself?" said Mr. Kennett, eagerly.

"No, no, indeed. But Aunt Eleanor can think of nothing now but Mr. Middleton. As soon as all this is over you shall see."

"But I wish you would get your uncle to visit Mr. Fletcher, he is so interesting."

"Oh, yes, I know; and so is his daughter, I think."

"Ah, Miss Harry" —

"Harry, my dear," said Mrs. Fanning, "I am sorry to interrupt this pleasant party, but Mr. Middleton wishes you to sing with him."

Harry went, and, according to Mr. Middleton, acquitted herself with great credit in various operatic duets, though Mr. Brittain could not enjoy them as he did the simple ballad she had sung with such passionate pathos early in the evening. There were skill and brilliancy in her singing, now, but the heart seemed wanting.

Her place at the piano was at last supplied by others, but Mr. Brittain had no more of her pleasant company. Per-

haps she, as well as he, had overheard Miss Edna's spiteful remark, that "that wretched little coquette had actually succeeded in inveigling Mr. Brittain by her arts and *espièglerie*." Nevertheless he went forth from her presence that night happier than he had been for many days.

"Who gave her that apple?" said Mr. Kennett, as they walked away together.

"Little Davy Poinsett," said Mr. Brittain, in a tone that seemed to convey a blessing to the child; for he thought as he answered his friend's question, "I was the only one to whom she was willing to give."


"Davy Poinsett!" said Mr. Kennett. "Well! did not she manage cleverly to puzzle old Dunbar?"

"Ralph, you did very wrong to encourage her in making fun of people."

"Lay it on, old Sober-sides!" said Mr. Kennett, laughing. "I do not know which has amused me more to-night, you or Harry Vane."

## CHAPTER XX.

### JANET.

 R. MIDDLETON'S debut was long known in the annals of Netherford as the "Shakespeare Night." It was a decided success; Mrs. Fanning's friends were never weary of saying, nor she of hearing, that they had never before enjoyed such an intellectual treat. Even Miss Edna, in her extravagant admiration for Mr. Middleton's genius, condescended to award to that evening the palm of superiority over all the Quodlibet meetings she had attended. The excitement lasted long, so that it was some days before Harry could find an opportunity to interest her aunt in the strangers at Four-Oaks. At length, about a week after the "Shakespeare Night," she found Mrs. Fanning somewhat at leisure to attend to her.

"Dear auntie," said she, "I have a favor to ask of you, a very great favor."

"What is it Harry?"

"I want you to take me, that is to go with me to Mr. Fletcher's."

"Child, Mr. Fletcher has been dead these twenty years or more."

"Oh Aunt Eleanor! not that one! you cannot have forgotten already what I told you about *this* Mr. Fletcher, and his daughter, who is the identical beautiful stranger who lent me her clothes the day I was caught in the rain."

"Was that what you were talking about the other day? Positively I was so busy I had forgotten all about it."

"But auntie you are not too busy now, do order the carriage and go with me. Only think how anxious I have been to see her and know her."

"No, Harry," said Mrs. Fanning, "no, most decidedly. I told you, and you cannot have forgotten, that when I went with you to that vulgar country place where they were stopping, I made it an express condition that you were never to quote it as a precedent on any future occasion."

"But auntie, we did not see her."

"I cannot help that."

"But auntie, I thought you said only the other day that it was right to visit and show attentions to strangers?"

"I admit that my dear, but I only meant well authenticated strangers; that is to say, strangers whom every one knows, whom every one acknowledges as proper to visit."

"Mrs. Hollis and old Mrs. Winstanley have been," said Harry.

Mrs. Fanning burst into a most provoking laugh. "And do you suppose, you little simpleton, that I am to be influenced by vulgar Mrs. Hollis, who never can wear fewer than five colors at a time; or illiterate Mrs. Winstanley, who tells her footman to 'git down and ax if them ladies is at home.' No no, my dear, if *they* visit there, the greater reason for my staying away."

"But Mr. Kennett is neither vulgar nor illiterate," pleaded Harry, "and he speaks very highly of them."

"And is it possible, Harry, that you quote Mr. Kennett's high opinion as a reason for taking them up? There is no doing anything with you; you are, without exception, the

most impolitic girl I ever saw! I have never seen Miss Fletcher, but from your own description I imagine her to be so very beautiful, that I wonder you have not the discretion to see that Mr. Kennett must be weaned from his admiration. Be guided for once by superior wisdom; think of this visit no more."

"What visit?" said Mr. Fanning, who came in just in time to hear his wife's concluding remark.

"A foolish whim of Harry's," said Mrs. Fanning, "to visit those Four-Oaks people."

"Dear uncle!" said Harry, "beg her to consent! Mr. Brittain knew Mr. Fletcher when he was here a long time ago, and you must have known him too; did you know him, Uncle John?"

"No child, I was living at Foxley then, but your mother knew him."

"Yes, I know, for Mr. Fletcher told me that I resembled her so much."

"When will you call on them, Eleanor?"

"I am not going at all, Mr. Fanning," said his wife.

"Why? They are as nice people as any about here. Old Anthony Fletcher, for all he was such a recluse, was a great man in his time; I think I would go, if I were you."

"Now Mr. Fanning! Do not, I beg of you, encourage Harry in this; I have my own reasons, and excellent ones they are too, for not wishing to call there. "Go Harry, and get ready to take a drive with Mr. Middleton, he wishes to see something of the environs of Netherford."

Harry obeyed; thinking as she went to her room, "it must be on mamma's account that Aunt Eleanor will not take me to Four-Oaks."

According to the mood she was in, Mr. Middleton was either very amusing, or very tiresome, to Miss Vane; and this afternoon, she was in a mood to find him very tiresome. It was with difficulty that she could treat him with becoming politeness. The ride seemed to her the dullest she had ever taken, and the only incident which occurred to interest her, had no tendency to make her more talkative. It was just as they approached the bridge over the deep, but narrow ravine which crossed the road, a little beyond Four-Oaks, that she was attracted by two figures, most familiar in their appearance, seated upon the knotted roots of a tree overhanging the water. She soon recognized the girl,

(who appeared to be weeping,) for there was no mistaking the beautiful stranger of Four-Oaks; and as they drove past, the gentleman was discovered to be Mr. Henry Thorne!

Harry had not seen him since the day she returned the miniature, and the letter found in Marcia's pocket, which had hitherto been forgotten, was now suddenly remembered. Marcia turned away her head as the carriage passed, but Mr. Thorne returned Harry's glance with a defiant scowl.

"Who are they?" asked Mr. Middleton.

Miss Fletcher and Mr. Thorne," answered Harry.

"I should have liked to see that girl's face, she has a finely poised head, which is a rare beauty. She has quite the air of a Diana; your style is more that of Hebe."

Harry was not in a good humor with Mr. Middleton.

"Nonsense!" said she, "it is my own style, I borrow nothing from the heathen gods and goddesses."

"They are excellent models, though," said Mr. Middleton. "It cannot be doubted that young ladies, by studying the graceful attitudes of ancient sculpture, would be as greatly benefited as artists are, in a different way, by the same study."

But Harry was thinking about Marcia and Mr. Thorne; and wondering if Mr. Kennett was aware of their intimacy, and Mr. Middleton's sounding periods fell upon an unheeding ear. When they reached home she was retreating to her room, absent and bewildered, when her aunt stopped her saying,

"Harry here is a note which came while you were riding."

Notes for the fascinating Miss Vane were no uncommon arrival at Fanning House, and this was by no means the first time she had found one awaiting her upon returning from a walk or drive; but an undefined thought made her feel that this was in some way connected with Marcia. And her presentiment proved true, in a certain sense, yet it did not prepare her for the contents of the missive. Mrs. Fanning was too delicate to open anything not directed to herself, but knowing as she did, that the messenger came with it from Four-Oaks, she was all impatience to learn its purport. She watched Harry closely as she read, and truly her face was a perfect study.

“MY DEAR LITTLE GIRL:—

I arrived here late last night with Mr. Fletcher's younger daughter, Janet, who is an invalid, and being very much fatigued, I slept late, and so heard nothing from Marcia until a few hours ago, about her life in Netherford. You may be sure that as soon as I heard you were here, and had been her first visitor, I was all impatience to see you. Mrs. Daniels, whom I met a month since, on her way home from the Springs, told me that your uncle was going to live on his plantation, and I feared that I should not have the happiness of seeing you here. It is a most agreeable disappointment to learn from Marcia, that you are living in that large white house I can see from my window.

I know that you cannot have been insincere in your expressions of attachment to me while at school, and therefore I fully believe that you will come to see me as soon as you learn that I am here.

Yours affectionately,

RACHEL PORTER.”

“Oh! aunty!” screamed Harry, throwing down the note, “now you will be obliged to go! Only think how strange life is! *She* has come, and there is another daughter.”

“I do not understand one word of what you are saying,” said Mrs. Fanning, picking up the note.

“Oh! read it, read it, do read it!” cried Harry. “It is from my sweet Mrs. Porter. You will go to see her, will you not?”

Mrs. Fanning read the note, and pondered over it. At length she said,

“Harry, I will go with you to Four-Oaks to-morrow, provided that you will be guided by my judgment, if hereafter I see fit to forbid any intimacy with that family.”

Harry promised, and went down stairs in the gayest spirits. She made herself perfectly charming to Mr. Middleton, so that when eleven o'clock came, he declared he thought it not more than nine. But every one in Fanning House, had sunk to sleep before Harry closed her excited eyes.

She welcomed the sunshine with a glad heart the next morning, and though time seemed to linger wearily, the carriage at last drove round to the gate, her aunt and she

entered it, and Harry was in a short time at Four-Oaks. The dead leaves were removed from the porch, and instead of the weird and withered master of the mansion, a stalwart figure whose first words proclaimed him a son of Erin, opened the door for Mrs. Fanning and her niece.

Mrs. Fanning, as has been said before, never did anything with a bad grace. She had made up her mind, as they were such near neighbors, to ask for the whole family, and to her inquiry, Michael Strout made answer,

"Shure, shure mem! it's the maister as studies mostly o'mornins."

He carried in his left hand a white glass bottle, in which a huge beetle was floating, in some colorless fluid, and he shook it conspicuously before his visitors' eyes.

"The ladies of the family, then," said Mrs. Fanning.

"Oh, is it the laddies ye'd be afther? Shure thin, there's no time like the prisint. Be plased to step in, an' welcome till ye." And with a magnificent flourish of his bottle, he ushered them into a room opposite the little study, where Harry and Mr. Brittain had their interview with Mr. Fletcher. It was a much larger room than that, and at the side opposite the entrance from the hall, a glass door opened into a small conservatory filled with flowers, which excited Mrs. Fanning's enthusiastic admiration. This little addition had been built within the last few weeks, and its freshness contrasted strongly with the dingy carpet and furniture, which had once been handsome, but were now shorn of their glories of color and polish. The pictures which hung on the walls, were both numerous and various; the beauties of some of them Mr. Middleton might have accounted for, but to Harry's inexperienced eyes they presented a very dingy and smoke-dried appearance. This was not the case, however with all, and while waiting for Mrs. Porter, she gazed with sincere delight at paintings of cool waterfalls in deep and shady glens, with sunbeams lying on mossy rocks; sea-nymphs, tumbling mid purple waves, where tritons blew their horns; still, lonely, silent lakes, whose blue depths gave back the trees and sky; mild-eyed madonnas, and pretty babes in the wood.

Mrs. Porter entered alone. Her appearance was plain, but lady-like, and the greeting she gave Harry was so cordial and affectionate that Mrs. Fanning was touched. Marcia came in soon after and Harry was delighted to



see that she made a most agreeable impression upon her aunt; for Marcia, unaccustomed to the society of young people, was more at ease with Mrs. Fanning than with Harry, whose enthusiasm embarrassed her.

"Mrs. Fanning," said Mrs. Porter, when, after a much longer visit than she had intended to pay, that lady rose to take leave," can you not leave Harry with us all day? I should not make such a request, perhaps, on Miss Vane's first call, but I have a little invalid charge upstairs, who has been entreating to see her; I hope you will not refuse."

To Harry's delighted surprise, her aunt permitted herself to be persuaded, when Marcia also urged the petition. She went up stairs with Mrs. Porter into a little room, where, reclining upon a low couch, was a child of some eight or ten years of age. She bore a strong resemblance to Marcia, but long-continued ill health had given to her features that peculiar expression which is too old for a child, yet hardly belongs to age.

"Janet," said Mrs. Porter, "this is Miss Harry Vane; she will spend the day with us."

The child turned her brilliant but sunken blue eyes upon Harry, and held out an emaciated hand, saying,

"She is very pretty; I am glad she will stay." And as Harry clasped the thin fingers in hers, she added, "Sit down here, I want to hear you talk. Can you not tell me about a boarding school?"

"I think I can," said Harry, smiling.

"Begin then, please. Marcia knows nothing about boarding schools, and I am tired of her giants and fairies."

Such an exordium was certainly not inspiring, but Harry, from the moment she beheld this frail, perishing little specimen of suffering humanity, was seized with a desire to do something for her. And so, with hearty good-will she sat down upon the side of the couch, and began to relate her boarding school experience. By degrees she warmed with her theme: her various frolics and scrapes were given with a raciness and drollery which made quiet Mrs. Porter and sedate Marcia laugh heartily, while Janet, never smiling, but with her large eyes fixed upon her visitor's face, listened with eager interest, saying impatiently, at every pause, "Go on, please go on!"

At last Mrs. Porter interfered. "Janet you are becom-

ing excited. You must rest now, and Miss Vane must prepare for dinner."

Janet turned on her pillow with a sigh, and as she moved Harry saw that her figure was much distorted. "What is the matter with her?" she asked of Mrs. Porter, as they left the room together, for as Marcia remained with her sister, she could speak to her old friend without reserve.

"She has spinal disease," said Mrs. Porter.

"Poor little thing! Poor little thing! Will she never be well?"

"No, my dear, never in this world."

"Oh! how dreadful! Does she always think about death?"

Mrs. Porter smiled. "I hope not *always* Harry. I have tried to disabuse her mind of all dread of death; but while she lives I want her to enjoy every pleasure she can."

"Do you think I made her happy this morning?"

"Yes, for she can have so little variety, and she is fond of company. She always begs to see every visitor."

"Then I will come to see her as often as I can. I am so glad I can amuse her."

"Your heart is as kind as ever, Harry," said Mrs. Porter, with a smile; and as dinner was now announced, she led the way down the narrow stairs.

In the dining room, which communicated with the study, was Marcia, standing with a book in her hand. She closed it quickly and laid it aside when they entered, saying,

"I will go for papa."

Harry had not thought of Mr. Fletcher before, and though usually as little afraid of strangers as the poor child up stairs, she felt somewhat uncomfortable at the idea of meeting him.

"Does he know that I am here?" she asked of Mrs. Porter.

"Oh, yes; he requested that you should be invited to see Janet."

Mr. Fletcher, however, did not betray by his manner any particular interest in her presence; he greeted her absently and shuffled into his seat. He had brought his book with him, and was at first so much absorbed in its contents that he forgot to eat. But when the dessert appeared he handed the volume to the servant, and after inquiring about Janet, he addressed himself to Harry, with the air of one who makes an effort to please.

"Have you been pursuing your studies in the bosky dells?" said he.

"No sir," said Harry, "I do not study at all."

"Why do you cull the flowers, then? Do you not analyze them?" said he with a slight frown.

Harry had not yet divested herself of the notion that he was a sort of supernatural person, and his questions rather embarrassed her.

"I — I beg pardon, sir; I do not understand," said she, hesitatingly.

"Are you no botanist?" said he sharply.

"No sir."

"Pity! pity!" he said, shaking his head, and then after a little pause, he added,

"Why not study birds?"

"I do not know how," said Harry.

"Every one," said he, "should have some pursuit as a resource against the evil days which come when life has lost its sheen, and vexing cares impede our joys." Turning to his daughter, he asked, "Is Mr. Brittain coming this evening?"

"Yes sir," said Marcia, "at four o'clock."

Harry felt that he had descended to topics within her comprehension, and she became very much interested. Why should Mr. Brittain be coming to Four-Oaks? But nothing was said at that time to enlighten her, and her curiosity was soon forgotten in contemplating the various articles of furniture in the room. The old side-board contained many pieces of old fashioned silver, and on the walls hung several well executed crayon-drawings. When they rose from the table, Harry went to examine more closely one of these pictures, a female head, respecting evening, with half closed eyes and poppies in her hair. It looked strangely familiar to her, and she asked who it was.

"Evening, or Twilight, which you will," said Mr. Fletcher shortly, and he instantly directed her attention to a little landscape, telling her that it was her father's work.

She recognized with a painful throb the very picture which formed the frontispiece to the mysterious little red book.

"It is a waterfall in the island of Madeira," said Mr. Fletcher.

"And did my father paint that head?" said Harry.

"No."

"Shall I ever be able to unravel this mystery?" thought Harry. "It is evident that no one is willing to tell me."

"Did you ever have a sister, Mr. Fletcher?" asked she.

"No," said he, "nor brother, nor any kindred, except the old man who sleeps at the foot of the cherry-tree down in the garden, and one cousin at Funchal in Madeira. Marcia go bring me the 'Last Days of a Philosopher.'"

Harry went up stairs, and found Mrs. Porter in Janet's room.

"Oh! Mrs. Porter!" said she, "how learned they are, and how ignorant I am!"

"My dear child," said Mrs. Porter, "Mr. Fletcher has spent a lifetime over books, and Marcia knows nothing but books."

"I wish I cared more about books," said Harry.

"You might cultivate a taste for them; you might study this winter."

"So Mr. Brittain said, but I do not know how."

"You know Mr. Brittain? Then you might study here with Marcia."

"Do you think I might? Would not Mr. Fletcher object?"

"No, I think he would be pleased. It would be an advantage to Marcia. She is going to study Latin and history with Mr. Brittain."

"Oh, I thought it was to be with you."

"My time is entirely occupied by Janet. I can not attend to any one else."

"I am afraid Mr. Brittain might not like it. And there he comes now. Who would have thought it was so late."

"Is not Mr. Brittain to be asked up stairs?" said Janet.

"I had not thought of it," said Mrs. Porter.

"Oh! yes, but I want it," said Janet querulously. "Go tell him! You can put me in the great chair."

It was useless to remonstrate; Janet was bent on having her own way. With Harry's assistance Mrs. Porter placed her in the chair, and wheeled her into the sitting-room adjoining, which jutted over the porch. Then, leaving her with her new-made friend she went to invite Mr. Brittain up stairs. Harry shrank out of sight behind an upright writing-desk as she heard them approaching.

"How do you do?" said Janet, extending her thin

hand to Mr. Brittain. "I have seen a young lady to-day, a beautiful young lady named Miss Vane, who has been telling me about boarding-school. Shall you hear Marcia's lessons."

"Yes," said Mr. Brittain, wondering all the while if Harry were still there.

"Well, where is Marcia? Oh! — Marcia, I wish you to say your lessons in this room, so that I may be present. Do you think it will be interesting, sir?"

"I hope so," replied Mr. Brittain.

"And where is Miss Vane?" continued Janet. "She was here just now."

Harry felt obliged to appear, but she was too much confused to notice how pleased Mr. Brittain was to see her.

"Miss Vane will study here also," said Janet.

"Oh, I did not say so," said Harry.

"But I say so," said Janet. "I want you to; you must. You know you say you are very ignorant."

So, after this singular fashion it was arranged to the satisfaction of all parties, but particularly to that of Mr. Brittain, that Harry should be received as a pupil with Marcia, Janet also stipulated that she should be present whenever it pleased her.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### A NEW SCHOLAR.



HARRY'S proposition to study at Four-Oaks was received by her uncle and aunt with great astonishment. Mr. Fanning, with his usual indulgence, gave a ready consent, but Mrs. Fanning at first demurred: it appeared to her such a very whimsical idea. Finally, however, she too yielded. Indeed she had but made a show of opposition, for she supposed that Mr. Kennett would be a frequent visitor there, and she had no fear that Harry would become a "blue."

So, three times a week, at three o'clock in the afternoon,

Harry might have been seen, in all weathers trudging away to Four-Oaks. And she soon felt sufficiently at home to run up alone to the little sitting-room over the porch, where an hour or two slipped away very pleasantly, and we may venture to hope, not without improvement.

Harry did not study arduously, but she did glean a wonderful fund of curious information with which she amused her uncle and astonished her aunt when she returned at tea-time.

Miss Harry's matriculation at this model school of instruction was not the only result of Mrs. Fanning's visit. People who were slow to follow in the footsteps of Mrs. Hollis and Mrs. Winstanley, made haste to call at Four-Oaks when they heard that Mrs. Fanning had been there. It is true that the educational project undertaken by Mr. Brittain received its full share of ridicule, and gave Mrs. Brittain a heart-ache which Miss Theresa could not soothe. But though it effectually prevented her ever extending any civilities to Mr. Fletcher's family, others were not withheld thereby from indulging their curiosity, or exercising their hospitality with regard to the eccentric inhabitants of the old brick house; and in a very short time Marcia could claim acquaintance with all the prominent people in Netherford. The Innibees were prompt to call; Mr. Paul fell desperately in love with her at first sight, and every now and then, to her infinite confusion, sent her a sonnet. Miss Susan concocted dainties for Janet, Miss Grace called frequently with a new song, or a new book, and Miss Emily sent her portfolio of drawings for the "dear little invalid's amusement." Every one was struck with Marcia's peculiar beauty, until Mr. Middleton, whose opinion was still of weight, pronounced her to be two inches too tall, and lacking expression.

He did not approve of the educational project, but his opposition only served to make obstinate Miss Harry more determined upon carrying it out. "Variety is the spice of life," she would say, when her friends laughed at the idea of her going to school; "and I know that that quotation is both proper and correct, for I see it in the Home Journal every week."

She took most sincere delight in the admiration which Marcia excited, and Mr. Kennett's warmly expressed thanks for the friendship she had evinced toward the stran-

gers seemed, as she saucily told him, to give her full permission to read her "live novel" as closely as she pleased. But at first she did not see much of the hero in company with the heroine. Mr. Brittain turned his attention in grave earnest to improving his pupils, and was a strict schoolmaster during study-hours. Though Mrs. Porter was always, and Janet often present, he would allow no interruption from them, and Marcia, as strict a student as tutor ever took delight in, denied herself to all visitors. Mr. Kennett had often tried, but always failed to gain admittance during these hours devoted to the informal intercourse of master and pupils; for Michael Strout was an incorruptible doorkeeper, and remorselessly refused all bribes.

One drizzly afternoon late in November, as Harry entered the grounds of Four-Oaks, she encountered Mr. Kennett, gazing disconsolately and wistfully at the windows of the little sitting-room.

"What is the matter?" asked she.

"I was wishing," said he, "that I were young enough to go to school."

Harry laughed. "Do you want to go to our school?"

"Yes," said Mr. Kennett, "but I can't get in."

"Oh! you do not know how to manage. Come with me, and I will gain you admission. But mind, you can only come as a visitor, and you must not come every day, and you must not talk nonsense, you must only talk about what would improve us, and you must stand between me and Mr. Brittain's wrath."

"There will be no necessity for that," said Mr. Kennett, laughing; "I shall only be safe when I plead you for defence. The person I stand most in awe of is that horrible old janitor."

"Oh, you do not know," said Harry, putting on a comically severe frown, "Mr. Brittain has awful brows. As to Michael Strout you will soon see how I manage him."

By this time they were at the door, and as Michael Strout opened it for them, Harry saluted him gravely with, "The top o' the mornin' to you Misthur Strout: I've brought a jantleman to see Miss Janet."

"And it's shure I am ye're a bit of a rogue, Miss Vane, I'm thinkin'," said Michael, with a twinkle of his gray eyes, as he let them pass.

"It is very delightful here, Mr. Kennett," said Harry, as

they went up stairs; "but I will tell you a secret; I do not study any."

"What!" said Mr. Kennett, in affected surprise, "not with that awful Professor?"

"No," answered she, shaking her head, a little sadly. "Marcia is a genius, you see, and so clever! He can get on with her but he never can make a scholar of me."

Mr. Brittain was sitting at the table writing. He looked up when they entered, and seemed very much annoyed at sight of Mr. Kennett. "Ralph!" he said, "you know you ought not to come here at this time."

"I did not come," said Mr. Kennett; "Miss Harry brought me. She says she does not know her lesson, and she is afraid of you."

"I did not!" said Harry; "he came himself. He came to see Janet. Where are they all?"

Mrs. Porter and Marcia made their appearance as she asked the question, pushing Janet along in her chair. Marcia blushed, and looked reproachfully at Harry, when she saw Mr. Kennett, and Mrs. Porter said, as soon as she had acknowledged his greeting,

"Harry you know this is contrary to rule; you should bring Mr. Kennett at some other time."

"Ah! Mrs. Porter, he will not be much trouble, and Janet will be so glad. Janet are you not glad that Mr. Kennett has come?"

"Mr. Kennett?" said Janet, eyeing him keenly. "That is the gentleman I asked Marcia to let me see last Saturday, and she would not. Have you come here to study also?"

"Yes," said Mr. Kennett.

"Let us begin!" said Mr. Brittain, impatiently; and he and Marcia sat down to books and maps without a word to Harry.

"There now!" she cried to Mr. Kennett, "you see I am ignominiously expelled."

"No, no," said Mr. Brittain.

"I do not care," said Harry; "I do not know my lesson. Mr. Kennett, let us look at Janet's scrap-books? May we not, Janet?"

Janet consented, and Harry turned over the pages of the huge folios without hearing a word of Mr. Kennett's whispered comments, for her thoughts were far away. "What



if Mr. Brittain loved Marcia? Poor Mr. Kennett! how fond he must be of his friend, what confidence he must have in him to be so light-hearted and gay, with all this before his eyes?" The lesson was over ere she had recalled her thoughts.

"Why do you not talk?" said Janet.

"Yes," said Mr. Kennett, "the lesson is over, the Professor has smoothed his 'awful brows,' and we may speak."

"I was thinking" — said Harry.

"Of that unlearned lesson?" asked Mr. Kennett.

"Ah, no!" said she, "but of something very different."

"You should take pattern by me," said Mr. Kennett; "you see how light-hearted I am. Are you really so much in dread of Mr. Brittain?"

Harry was about to give some merry answer, but she first stole a glance at Mr. Brittain's face. He was leaning his head on one hand and idly scratching with his pencil upon a scrap of paper.

"He is really offended, I am afraid," said she. And so he really was, but not with her. He only answered by looking at Mr. Kennett.

"Come now," said his friend, "I acknowledge that I was wrong to come here, but the temptation was irresistible. But I will promise to come no more until the lessons are over; there can be no objection to that, can there Mrs. Porter?"

"If you will faithfully adhere to that resolution," said Mrs. Porter.

"I promise," he replied. "And now Miss Harry, let us put the grim gentleman in a good humor. Miss Fletcher, you were expressing a wish the other day to hear Mr. Middleton read; have you never made Mr. Brittain read for you? Do you know, that to my taste he reads quite as well as that pet lion of Miss Harry's? You should claim half an hour's reading of some 'elegant extracts' as a reward for good lessons."

"I wish you would read for us?" said Marcia.

"If you wish it, certainly," said Mr. Brittain, relaxing.

"I wonder," thought Harry, "if he would have consented so readily for me? What a great thing it is to be gifted like Marcia. Poor Mr. Kennett! Mr. Brittain has had one love, why should he have another? It is not fair. Poor Mr. Kennett!"

"Have you heard the 'Tale of a Trumpet,' Miss Harry?" shouted Mr. Kennett; "I have asked you twice."

"No, what is it?" said she, laughing.

"You know it, Miss Fletcher."

"Yes, but I would not object to hearing it read."

"What is it?" said Janet.

"A funny story," said Mr. Kennett.

Marcia brought the book, and Mr. Brittain began. He had the gratification of perceiving that his little audience were quite as much pleased as the large and fashionable assemblies who so often listened to Mr. Middleton. Janet listened, as usual, without a smile, but with dilated eyes and flushed cheeks, and Harry increased the amusement by twisting up a sheet of paper and pantomiming Dame Eleanor.

"That is grand!" said Janet, when Mr. Brittain had finished. "I am glad Mr. Kennett came up; you may all be vexed but I like him. And Harry likes him too, do you not Harry?"

"Yes," said Harry, and she laughed.

Mr. Kennett had found a seat by Marcia, and the look of annoyance had returned to Mr. Brittain's face. It was late; the wind had risen and was howling through the naked boughs of the three great oaks, and dashing the rain against the windows. Michael Strout had been up to say that the carriage had come for Miss Vane, but she was unwilling to leave Mr. Brittain offended with her. She went with Mrs. Porter when Janet was wheeled into her room, but presently returning she sat down by him, and looking with her straightforward eyes into his face, she said,

"Do you think I have done very wrong? I am very sorry that I have offended you."

"No, no, — no, no, you have not" — said Mr. Brittain.

"Then I am very glad!" said she, jumping up. "That is all; now I must go."

"Oh! but you must not go alone," said Mr. Brittain; "let me go with you?"

"Good night Marcia! Good-by, Mr. Kennett!" cried Harry, and she ran down stairs, Mr. Brittain following her.

But when the carriage door was opened, to his infinite regret, out sprang Mr. Middleton.

"You have kept me waiting very long, Harry," said he.

"Have I indeed?" she returned carelessly; "I have enjoyed myself so much!"

She stepped into the carriage and Mr. Middleton followed. Mr. Brittain stretched his hand through the door to bid her good-by.

"Oh! Mr. Brittain!" she cried, "you must not walk in the rain; if you will not see me home, you must let me see you home. Get in, I beg."

Mr. Brittain jumped in, all undismayed by Mr. Middleton's frowning visage.

Harry's first action was to throw her hood on the seat by Mr. Brittain, unbutton the leather curtain and peep out.

"Oh!" she cried, "how I do love a ride in the rain!"

"You are very imprudent, Harry," said Mr. Middleton; "you should not do that."

"It will not hurt me," she said, and undid another button.

"I think, Miss Vane," said Mr. Brittain, "Mr. Middleton is right; it is hardly prudent to do that."

Harry quickly dropped the curtain. She thought she had annoyed Mr. Brittain quite enough for one day, and was glad to give some proof of her contrition.

In those days a sort of large sacque cloak with pockets was much worn, and Harry had on one of gray cloth. In mere restlessness she dived into the pockets, and cried childishly,

"Oh! guess what I have found? An apple! an apple! One of those beauties which Uncle Fanning brought from the plantation yesterday. Mr. Brittain you shall have it for the pleasure you gave me this afternoon." Before he could utter a word of thanks she resumed, "Mr. Middleton, do you know he can read as well as you; he made us laugh so over the 'Tale of a Trumpet.'"

"If you had told me that that was a favorite of yours I would have read it for you," said Mr. Middleton, stiffly.

"You should have thought about it," said Harry. "I did not know."

"It is rather a low order of thing," said Mr. Middleton.

"Well, my capacity is not very elevated," returned Harry, complacently.

"I do not mean to say that your taste is low," Mr. Middleton hastened to explain; "but it is a low model to form one's tastes by. You can hardly be said to have a taste yet, you are so very young. It is of the greatest importance that you should have some one to point out what is proper to admire."

"I beg your pardon!" said Harry, "I have a taste, a very decided taste. I am eighteen years old, and I will not suffer any one to choose for me what I must like in dress, or people, or poetry."

"I fancy if you were under my tuition" — began Mr. Middleton.

"But I am not," interrupted Harry, "and I never will be if I may not choose for myself."

"Mr. Brittain," said Mr. Middleton, despairing of making any impression upon Harry, "what is the regular course of reading you have marked out for this young lady? But after all, without the advantage of foreign travel, how can an education be perfected? Harry, you must go through a course of foreign travel as soon as you have finished this course of study."

"Mr. Brittain do you think I will ever get through?" said she, making a grimace.

"Oh! yes," he replied.

"Oh! no," said she; "I have long since discovered that I may make a pretty good housekeeper, but I shall never make a scholar."

"A certain degree of cultivation," — began Mr. Middleton. But here the carriage stopped at Mrs. Brittain's gate, and Mr. Middleton paused in a manner which showed that he did not intend to proceed until Mr. Brittain should have alighted.

"Good evening Mr. Middleton, good night Miss Vane!" said Mr. Brittain.

"Must you leave us?" said Harry, taking his proffered hand; "can you not take tea with us?"

"Thank you," said he hesitating, but he already had his foot upon the sidewalk. Harry looked at him and thought, "Poor Mr. Brittain, poor Mr. Kennett! Oh! dear, what a pity!" Little did she surmise that at one word from her he would willingly have entered the carriage again. But the word was unspoken; the carriage drove off; and Mr. Brittain stood on the porch awhile, watching the chill and rainy night come down on the hills beyond the Ominihaw, and creep over the old field lying between Four-Oaks and Fanning House. He thought with a sigh, that he should see Harry no more until the next week, and he turned from the cheerless prospect without to the cheerful sitting-room, where a bright fire blazed, and a well trimmed lamp shed its

light over a table which made as good a show of old family silver as the sideboard at Four-Oaks.

He was not much given to day-dreaming, but in his present mood a vision of a bright and smiling face, a dainty figure in a dress of rich-colored stuff set off by the whitest of collars, came unsought and took the opposite chair. Again he seemed to be reading the "Tale of a Trumpet," and the beautiful vision was twisting the newspaper into a horn to stick into the tiniest and whitest of ears, guiltless of barbarous earrings.

His mother coming in, broke the spell. "Sylvo you must be very wet? How could you be so careless as to come off without your umbrella?"

"Really I forgot all about my umbrella! I did not think of the rain, and left it at Four-Oaks."

"And walked home in the rain? Sylvo you will catch your death of cold."

"I am not wet at all ma'am; I rode home."

"Rode home? Why, — I thought they had no carriage."

"Miss Vane brought me home."

"Miss Vane?" repeated his mother, in a melancholy tone, and sighed, and shook her head.

"Mr. Middleton was with her," explained her son, "or I should have seen her home."

"She is able to take care of herself, I should think," said Mrs. Brittain, sharply.

Her son did not attempt to argue the point, but she was not to be driven from the charge by silence. "All those Fannings were bold, and this one is equal to any of them."

"I never saw any boldness in her, ma'am."

"Of course not; she will not show it where it is best concealed."

"Mother I wish you would not be so prejudiced."

"Sylvo!" she cried, rising and standing before him, "tell me truly; — do you like Miss Vane?"

"Very much indeed," he said, in a low but steady voice.

"Oh! Sylvo!! — she sighed forth, sinking into her chair. "Has it come to that?" And the poor old lady swung herself backwards and forwards in her high-backed rocking-chair, abandoned to all the luxury of woe.

"Mother," said he, "you would like her yourself if you would only make up your mind to know her. She is so warm-hearted, so generous, so beautiful, you would certainly like her if you would see her without prejudice."

"Do not talk to me about prejudice! It is just as I expected; once Mrs. Fanning makes up her mind to anything she will do it; she has ensnared you."

"I have not said that I love Miss Vane, and neither she nor her aunt suspects that she is ever for one moment in my thoughts."

"Oh! then, my dear son! it is only a fancy, depend upon it. It is merely a fancy; conquer it while it is yet time."

Mr. Brittain did not answer immediately. After a considerable pause he said,

"Mother, have you ever reflected that I am thirty-one years old? Will you never be willing for me to marry?"

"Oh Sylvo! to think that you should be thirty-one and fall in love with a girl like this! If it were at all a suitable match—but Sylvo, think, she is so young."

"She is eighteen," said Mr. Brittain in a tone he had copied from Harry herself.

"And what are eighteen years? She is so frivolous."

"She is not so frivolous as you think; it is the mere exuberance of youth."

"But would she love you?"

"I do not know—she might."

"Oh! Sylvo! do you remember—have you considered how rich she is? You would be thought a fortune-hunter."

"No!" said Mr. Brittain, with a start; "God help me! I had forgotten that!"

He rose and walked about the room, and his mother saw in his perturbed countenance stronger confirmation of his feeling for Harry than any spoken words could be. And the burthen of his thoughts, as he walked up and down, was, "Oh! that she were poor! I do not care what the world may think, but if *she* were to suspect me of such sordid motives!"

While his mother, ever swift to run into extremes, began to think, "Well, brother Lewis left me well enough off, and Sylvo will have it all. The house is very dull and lonely to be sure; a bright young creature would enliven it. And I am sure, I want him to be happy. But where is there one worthy of Sylvo?"

Meantime Harry, riding home with Mr. Middleton, was expressing her sentiments with a freedom not very agreeable to that gentleman.

"Harry" he said, in a very authoritative voice, as the carriage drove away from Mrs. Brittain's gate, "I must say you are a very indiscreet young lady!"

"Oh!" answered she carelessly, "all girls are more or less indiscreet, except some very proper ones whom nobody can endure."

"You must be aware," he continued, not at all checked by her reply, "that it was very indiscreet in you to give Mr. Brittain that apple."

At first Harry was inclined to be in a passion at this speech; but the torrent of vehement words which rose to her lips was stayed, the angry fire of her brown eyes was subdued to a sly, mirthful twinkle, as she simply asked,

"Why?"

"Because Mr. Brittain is not a proper person to be encouraged; he will be made to entertain ideas of addressing you, which, as he is a respectable person, you would regret, you ought to regret, as you could not possibly accept him, he is so entirely out of your sphere."

"Yes, I know he is," she said a little sadly, as she thought of the formidable volumes he and Marcia sometimes read together.

Mr. Middleton misunderstood the sigh which accompanied her answer. "And you cannot be too circumspect in avoiding any romantic fancy yourself. I cannot say that I entirely approve of these literary afternoons; if you desire to improve I am quite competent to direct your studies."

"You are very disagreeable!" said Harry, shortly.

"I am prompted by the great interest I feel in you," he said, trying to take her hand. But Harry preferred keeping her hand to herself.

"You are so young" —

Now to Harry this constantly reiterated phrase was peculiarly obnoxious. It seemed to her equivalent to saying, in slang parlance, "You are so green;" and she always resented it.

"I am old enough to be treated with respect!" she interrupted.

"The female sex are entitled to respect, to courtesy, to adoration, from infancy to age," said Mr. Middleton pompously; "but they require the guidance of a strong hand."

"And a wise head!" said Harry.

"And a wise head," repeated Mr. Middleton. "And

now permit me to recur to the advice I was giving in regard to Mr. Brittain. You know he has no wealth and no position" —

"He has!" interrupted Harry indignantly. "He is universally respected, and his mind is a kingdom!"

"He is not a man of society," said Mr. Middleton.

"And yet I always thought him a gentleman," said Harry with subdued irony.

"There are a certain class of men worthy of the highest respect, but yet not such as young ladies should condescend to encourage."

"So I have always thought," said the malicious little lady.

"Mr. Brittain, you must be aware is entirely unsuited to you, and could only" —

"You have said enough about Mr. Brittain; now I wish you would drop the subject. You misjudge both him and me."

"Child, you mistake" — began Mr. Middleton.

"Don't call me 'child,'" interrupted Harry, angrily.

"You do not understand me," he said, recoiling a little.

"Yes I do, I understand you perfectly; you do not understand me."

"Let us come to an understanding then; it is what I have been striving at ever since I have been here. I never admired a rose without thorns, and I must say that the very few flaws in your character only enhance your perfections. A little careful culture would render you the model of your sex; but he only could succeed in such an undertaking to whom you would surrender your hand and heart. Surely I need waste no words in persuading you how congenial such a task would be to me?"

"No Mr. Middleton, I can assure you you need not," said Harry, repressing her indignation. "I know that I am very full of faults, but I would rather remain as I am forever than" —

"I can assure you," said Mr. Middleton in a tone which was meant to be kind, but which was insufferably patronizing, "I am not to be repulsed by the coyness of maidenhood. I cannot have utterly failed to gain your favor, since your aunt has enlisted on my side."

"My aunt cannot influence me in this," said Harry firmly; "and I wish you distinctly to understand that you



will never gain any more of my favor than you at present possess."

"We shall see," said Mr. Middleton with audacious confidence as he handed her out of the carriage. And from that time forth he was continually making allusions to a very wealthy uncle, old and unmarried, whose namesake he was. Instead of "F. S. Middleton," he now wrote "Francis Soane Middleton," whenever he had occasion to sign his name, and as he wrote what he called a *stylish* hand, many were the bits of paper, and blank leaves of books covered with his treble appellation, until one day Harry advised him to buy a title if he could find such a thing for sale. His allusions to his wealthy relative sometimes amused, sometimes annoyed her, and at last she told him plainly that if the old gentleman was so near dying, as he represented, it was his duty to go to him. But Mr. Middleton did not take the hint.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### LONELY TONY.



HE gayeties in Netherford commenced about this time with Miss Harry Vane's first party. It was a brilliant affair, and soon followed by others in quick succession. At every gathering Harry's vivacity made her the most admired guest, for Marcia's more stately beauty could not bear the palm away from the sprightly Miss Vane. She lacked the ease which was Harry's peculiar characteristic, and she so seldom went into society that her timidity never wore off. She was in the habit of excusing herself from attending parties and accepting invitations to ride, on account of her little sister's feeble health; and yet it was said that she was often seen late in the evening walking with a gentleman. Harry, when she heard these reports, thought it must be Mr. Ken-

nett, and pitied "poor Mr. Brittain." But some enterprising individual at length discovered that Miss Fletcher's constant attendant was no other than the most dissipated young man in town, a law-student at Kenby College, by name, Mr. Henry Thorne. This information was conveyed to Harry by Grace Innibee, in Mr. Kennett's presence, and he was rather surprised to see that she received it with so much composure. She was always so ready to fight the battles of her friends that he had expected her to deny the charge; but the suspicion that she was in some way connected with those walks sealed his lips until Grace Innibee was gone. Then he said,

"You had nothing to say to Grace Innibee's gossip about your friend?"

"It is never worth while to answer her," said Harry, rather evasively, he thought.

"You do not believe it, then?"

Harry did not answer.

"Tell me," he said, "why is Mr. Thorne walking with her instead of with you?"

"I do not know," answered Harry, simply.

"I thought Mr. Thorne was your declared adorer."

"I have not seen Mr. Thorne since I quarrelled with him at the Springs."

"How did Miss Fletcher come to know him, then? I thought you took him there."

"No; but a great many visit her," said she, with a smile.

"I have been there very often, but I have never seen him yet," said Mr. Kennett.

Harry looked puzzled. "Nor I," she said, after a moment's pause.

"Harry, tell me! Does she like him?"

"She has never said a word to me about him," said Harry.

"Did you know that he was with her so much?"

"I saw them once together."

"Ah! I see!" said Mr. Kennett, laughing, "you are determined to be a friend to both of us!"

"Of course," answered Harry; and nothing more was said on the subject, at the time. But, as day after day Mr. Brittain looked graver and sadder, and Mr. Kennett's gay spirits seemed to ebb away, she grew quite out of patience with Marcia.

"Aunt Eleanor!" said she to Mrs. Fanning, one day, "I think you are right about flirting; I am convinced that it is an odious practice. I will never flirt."

"I am glad, my love, to hear you say so," Mrs. Fanning replied; "I was sure that you must one day acknowledge me to be right about that."

And Mr. Middleton, who was present, imagining this resolution to be the result of the little lecture he had given her about Mr. Brittain, bestowed on Harry an approving smile, which would have made her contradict her assertion immediately, if her aunt had not been present.

"Louisa Dean," said Mrs. Fanning, when Mr. Middleton had left the room, "told me the other day, that she feared you and Mr. Kennett were not getting on well; what is the matter?"

"We are the greatest friends," said Harry.

"Well, Harry, you know better what you mean by that phrase than I do, but I warn you in time that it is your own fault if you do not secure Mr. Kennett. However, as Miss Marcia seems to be a formidable rival, I feel it my duty to say that you ought not to rebuff Mr. Middleton. He is an excellent match; of a good family, well-connected, will probably be very wealthy, and is certainly not a person to be trifled with."

"O—h dear!" thought Harry, "I wish I had not said anything about flirting!"

Christmas was near at hand. Mrs. Mellen's Affghan was finished at last and carefully packed up with a presentation poem from Mr. Paul, ready to be sent at eight o'clock on Christmas eve.

It was the morning of the 24th of December, clear but cold, when Harry, wrapped in her gray cloak, with her crimson-lined hood tied under her dimpled chin, came running every step of the way from the gate to the porch of Four-Oaks. She thought she heard Marcia's voice in the dining-room, and thither she went. When she opened the door, however, she found only Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Brittain.

"Oh dear!" she cried; "I beg your pardon, Mr. Fletcher. I thought Marcia was here."

"Come in to the fire, Miss Vane, and warm yourself. It can hardly be colder in Iceland than it is to-day," said Mr. Fletcher.

The fire was very inviting, and Harry held out her fingers to warm. "Iceland," said she, "I was reading about Iceland the other day. Have you been there, Mr. Fletcher? You have been everywhere."

Mr. Fletcher shook his head. "Not everywhere, Miss Vane," said he.

"But Marcia says you have been to Greece and Egypt. I should think you would be always talking about these countries!"

"Is it not Chateaubriand, Mr. Brittain, who says old men and travellers love to talk? I should therefore have a double temptation. Ah! Miss Vane, I have said in my heart many times, in the words of Chateaubriand's gifted countrywoman, '*voyager est, quoi qu'on en puisse dire, un des plus tristes plaisirs de la vie.*' I like better to dwell on anything than the years I have wasted, absolutely wasted, in travel. We will not speak of journeys, now."

"And at this season," said Mr. Brittain, "our thoughts cluster more naturally around our homes."

"Dear old Christmas!" said Harry. "How I wish I still believed in Santa Claus. And that reminds me that I must be in haste to see Marcia. Mr. Fletcher, is she upstairs?"

"I think she is," he replied. "Janet sent for her a few moments since. She has some ideas of her own about celebrating Christmas."

"And so have I," said Harry, gayly. "So I will go up stairs." Marcia and Janet were singing to a homely, quaint old melody, the words of a Christmas carol,

"God rest you, merry gentlemen,  
Let nothing you dismay,  
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,  
Was born upon this day;  
To save us all from Satan's power,  
When we were gone astray.  
O, tidings of comfort and joy,  
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour, was  
Born on Christmas Day.

Mr. Brittain, hearing their voices, followed Harry upstairs and stood listening with her on the landing.

"Oh!" cried she, catching his arm, as the voices paused at the end of a verse, "do you not love the Christmas time? I am sorry for people who have no Christmas. Let us go

in," she added, impetuously, as they began again to sing; "let us go sing with them."

They went in; Marcia stopped for a moment, but Janet, like Harry, wanted them all to sing together.

"Come, Mr. Brittain; Harry, you sing too; here is a book," she said; and they all joined in the last verse.

Now to the Lord sing praises,  
All you within this place,  
And with true love and brotherhood  
Each other now embrace;  
This holy tide of Christmas  
All others doth efface.

"This is a beautiful introduction to my errand, Marcia," said Harry, when the carol was over. "I want you to come to St. Botolf's this afternoon, to help about dressing the church. Please do not say no; Mr. Kennett told me he would come for you."

"To dress the church," cried Janet. "Are you going, Marcia?"

"Yes, she is," answered Harry.

Janet broke forth into a long, wailing cry. "Oh! I wish I could go! I wish I could go! I never was in a church in my life; I was not even baptized in a church."

It was the first time Harry had ever heard her utter a complaint, and it moved her inexpressibly. The tears started to her eyes as she ran up to Janet and tried to soothe her.

"Oh! do not cry, do not cry, Janet; it is not such a grand thing after all, and it is very hard work."

"Go away!" said Janet, pushing her. "It is not true; I know it must be grand!"

Harry ran out into the hall, sat down on the stairs, and burst into tears. Mr. Brittain came out to comfort her.

"Poor little Janet! poor little Janet!" said Harry, over and over again, "I would not have pained her so for all the enjoyment I expect to have this Christmas. It was so selfish in me not to think of her, and she was so happy singing."

"I am sure," said Mr. Brittain, "you are excusable; Janet will soon forget it."

"But I have something for her that I know will delight her, only she is not to have it until to-morrow. Go back,

please, and persuade Marcia to come to St. Botolf's this afternoon, only do not let poor little Janet hear you."

"If I persuade her to go with Mr. Kennett may I go with you?"

"Yes," answered she; "come for me at three."

Mr. Brittain returned to the sitting-room, while she hurried home, rather uncomfortable at the thought of having deprived Mr. Brittain of the pleasure of going with Marcia to the church.

Within the walls of St. Botolfs that afternoon "speckled vanity" held sway. The Christmas Eve, with all its hallowed associations, and the sacred shelter of the church combined, were no protection against evil inspirations. Very few were the thoughts, it is sad to say, that lingered around the lowly manger. Miss Edna Poinsett and Miss Susan Innibee came to high words about the dressing of the altar; Miss Sallie Hart was discussing the stranger of Four-Oaks in no very amiable manner, and Miss Emily and Miss Grace, having Mr. Middleton all to themselves, made some sly remarks about Harry, far from charitable.

Sallie Hart had come to pass the Christmas with Mrs. Dean, and make a last effort to secure Mr. Kennett. She was manufacturing letters for a motto, with Mr. Sutton's assistance. She would have preferred the aid of Mr. Middleton, but that gentleman was too well satisfied with the rapt attention with which Miss Emily listened to his opinions on church architecture. And certainly Mr. Sutton was more endurable than Mr. Paul, who, leaning idly on a ladder, viewed the scene with a poet's eye, "in a fine frenzy rolling."

Harry sat in the open space around the chancel, working at a garland. Richard Poinsett worked with her, greatly to Miss Edna's indignation and Mr. Brittain's also; but his mother was not there, or she might have been indignant as well as Miss Edna. They were quieter than the other workers. Mr. Brittain was watching Harry, and Richard was too much absorbed in his work for speech. As for Harry herself, her thoughts were busy about Marcia. She could not imagine why she did not come, and anxiously looked for her; but every time the door opened she was doomed to be disappointed. And the door opened very often, for Jack and Mortimer were there, wandering about like restless ghosts.

"Somebody give me a knife, please," said Harry, after trying in vain to break off a branch which protruded too much.

"I've one!" cried Mr. Dunbar, who had just taken his seat beside her. "Don't trouble yourself, Richard, don't trouble yourself, Mr. Brittain, I've got one just sharpened on the grindstone before I left home, and I'll have it out in a jiffy." And fumbling in his pocket, while Harry waited in patient amusement, he pulled out a fishing-line, a pipe, a little bundle of seed, two or three keys, and a silver whistle. At last he found the knife, which he handed to Harry, after having deposited the other contents of his pocket on the bench beside Mr. Brittain.

"Try it now," said he. "It is sharp as any razor."

"Thank you," said she, cutting off the twig. "Now, if I only had a little more string."

Richard went in search of some.

"Oh, never mind, Richard! Here is some," she cried, seizing the fishing-line. "Here is a nice, strong string." And before Mr. Dunbar could remonstrate it was cut in two.

"My very best fishing-line," cried he. "It took me a whole morning to make it."

"A fishing-line?" said Harry. "I thought it was a piece of cord. I thought you put it there *pro bono publico*."

"I have forgotten all my French," said Mr. Dunbar, sulkily.

The twinkle of Harry's wide eyes was irresistible; Mr. Brittain and Richard both smiled.

"Oh!" she said, in a low tone to Mr. Brittain, "how I wish I knew some Greek, he would think it was German. Tell me how to say, 'You funny old goose, you will be the death of me,' in Greek, Mr. Brittain?" But before he could answer her with the grave rebuke he meditated, the door opened, and this time Marcia entered with Mr. Kennett. Harry forgot all about Greek and Mr. Dunbar, and went to meet her friend in the aisle.

"Well, I really feared you were not coming," said she, as she conducted her to the spot where she had been sitting. "Sit here now, Miss Tardy, on this hassock, and finish my garland. I think you might work now, while I play." Marcia smiled and obeyed. "I could not come earlier," said she, "but I will be very industrious to make up for lost time."

Mr. Kennett yielded to Miss Hart's signals and took a seat by her. He could watch Marcia from this position, and he knew that he could not talk to her in such a crowd; and as he had not paid Miss Hart the attention of driving her into town, he was willing to atone for it by sitting near her. Now that she had secured Mr. Kennett, Miss Hart no longer cared to talk to Mr. Sutton; so with the most flattering smile she said to him,

"Why is it we have had no music this afternoon? That beautiful Fantasia is ringing in my head all the while. Can you not let me hear it again?"

Sallie Hart never yet thought music better worth listening to than the conversation of her beaux, but she knew that Mr. Sutton fondly believed himself a veritable Amphion, whom nothing could resist.

"I do not know whom I could find to work the bellows," he said, rising promptly at Miss Sallie's suggestion.

"Those Poinsett children, could you not?" said she.

"I suppose so," said he, and he went in search of Mortimer and Jack. It did not take long to find them, for soon the pealing organ filled the church with sound.

"You cannot think how that creature bores me," said Miss Sallie, oblivious of the Fantasia which was ringing in her ears.

"He is very devoted," said Mr. Kennett, absently. He was looking at Marcia, weaving the garland Harry had left. Her dark blue dress was partly hidden by a crimson shawl, and the snowy nubia had caught upon the comb which confined her hair, and was hanging about her head like a cloud indeed. The short December day was dying in the west, and through the chancel window a flood of light poured down upon her, reminding him of pictures of the Madonna.

Mr. Sutton, finding his bellow's-blowers not very tractable, dismissed them very soon, and busied himself with the music-books. Suddenly a succession of shrieks from the direction of the organ-loft filled every one with alarm; The ladies screamed, the gentlemen started up. Presently the doors were jerked violently open, and Jack and Mortimer, ghastly pale, with bristling hair, and dilated eyes, rushed in, sobbing and crying, while old Nick Bayne tramped close behind.

"What mischief have you been perpetrating, Mortimer?" said Miss Edna, sharply.



"Lone—ly To—ny!" gasped Jack. "I seen him! O-o-o-h! he made a face at me!"

"Alf Sutton's caper, I will answer for it," sang out Mr. Paul.

"No such thing!" answered Mr. Sutton, indignantly, from the organ-loft. "Do you suppose I have no more sense of propriety, than to be playing such pranks in church?"

"It aint nothing at all," said Nick Bayne, a man of few words. "Them boys would go a prying into my belfry, and it's dark up there, and a fancy tuk 'em."

"I am ashamed of you!" said Miss Edna. "I thought you were too enlightened to believe such idle tales. And you, Jack, to express yourself so ungrammatically! I am seriously inclined to give you a composition to write to-morrow."

During the excitement Miss Hart sat in pretty terror, her hands over her eyes; but finally she permitted herself to be soothed by Mr. Middleton, and resumed her labors.

The last garland was hung, the last motto tacked to the wall, and the refuse evergreens cleared away just in time for evening prayers.

Old Dr. Mellen made a few remarks suitable to the occasion, and then the choir sang the Christmas hymn. Harry thought of Janet, and was almost ready to cry. She reflected sadly how full her heart had been of scorn for Miss Edna, and aversion for Mr. Middleton, and contempt for Mr. Dunbar. "Ah me!" she said to herself, "who here is in tune for Christmas? Alas, not I!"

Perhaps there were others as much sobered by the solemn evening service as Harry, for the church was vacated very quietly.

"Marcia," whispered Harry, softly, "do come to my Christmas-tree to-morrow night? I will not half enjoy it unless you are there."

"Dear Harry, I would," said Marcia, "but I cannot leave Janet."

"Ah, true! I forgot," said Harry; and kissing her, she added, "A happy Christmas to you, dear Marcia."

"Thank you," said Marcia, her eyes filling with tears; "a happy Christmas to you, too, Harry."

And while such good wishes were resounding on all sides, Harry, as they passed out of the door, said,

"You are going home with me, Mr. Brittain, and I will reserve my good wishes for you until we part."

The porch was crowded, and it was dark; Mr. Kennett and Marcia were a little way behind. Some one pulled Harry's sleeve.

"A note for you," said Nick Bayne, in a muffled voice. "Lonely Tony."

"Oh, dear!" cried she, gayly, "a note from a ghost! But I will take it."

"Harry," whispered Marcia in her ear a moment after, "that note is for me; Nick Bayne has just told me so. He mistook you for me." Harry gave it up instantly without a word. Mr. Brittain and Mr. Kennett had already suspected that it was Mr. Thorne in the belfry, and Mr. Brittain had seen Harry receive the note, but he knew nothing of her giving it up to Marcia, while Mr. Kennett had seen Marcia take it from Harry's hand.

"Good night, Marcia! good night, Mr. Kennett," cried Harry, as she turned down the Confessional with Mr. Brittain. "Now, Mr. Brittain, you will be sure to come to my Christmas-tree to-morrow night, will you not?"

The hand which had received the fatal note, and which still held it, for all he knew, was on his arm. He felt that he ought not to go, and he had the courage to say:

"My mother would miss me on Christmas night."

"Ah! but bring her with you."

"Do you really care so much about my coming?"

"Oh! no; not if you would rather not," she answered simply. They had now reached the gate, and she added, "But I am a good friend of yours, Mr. Brittain, and I do hope, with all my heart, you may have a happy Christmas, for I am as happy as a bird myself."

"Child," he said, with sudden passion, "do not trust your happiness to him!"

Harry laughed a light-hearted laugh. "What! old Pomposity? No, indeed!"

"Mr. Thorne," said Mr. Brittain.

"I thought you meant Mr. Middleton! I have not seen Mr. Thorne since we quarrelled at the Springs. He hates me now, and I hate him."

"He is not worthy of confidence."

"I believe you," answered Harry; "and Marcia — But, Mr. Brittain" —

Now Harry had been reproaching herself bitterly for having, as she supposed, made Mr. Brittain feel unhappy by sending Mr. Kennett to bring Marcia to St. Botolf's. She had been casting about in her mind as they walked home, for some means to compensate him, if possible, for his disappointment. She had been very anxious to have him come to her Christmas-tree, because on one of the topmost branches was a present for him, not from herself, though she had suggested it, but from Mr. and Mrs. Fanning. She would not urge him to come, however, because, as Marcia had declined, she thought he might prefer to go to Four-Oaks. But she was a complete child in many respects, and she had a child's theory, that what would give pleasure would ease pain. So she determined to ask him in and present him with the handsome gold pen then and there, without waiting for Christmas Day.

"But, Mr. Brittain, will you not come in and look at my Christmas-tree? Do come in, it is so pretty."

Mr. Brittain smiled and went in with her. She took a candle from the front parlor, and led him into the room back of it, generally used as a sitting-room,

"There, now!" said she, admiringly, "is it not a beauty?"

"It is indeed, Miss Vane, very handsome."

"Shall I light the tapers? You can hardly judge of it, else." And she lighted one or two of the colored wax candles, and was proceeding to light the others, when Mr. Brittain caught her hand, and, blowing out those already lighted, begged her not to spoil her tapers only for his gratification.

"But I shall do something better than that for your gratification!" cried she, gayly. "Uncle Fanning and Aunt Eleanor are gone away; Christmas is such a mysterious time, they said not a word to me, but I know they are gone to the depôt, to see about a box which ought to come for me. And so, as you will not be here to-morrow, let me tell you that there is something for you on that tree."

"Some sugar-plums, perhaps," said Mr. Brittain. Her delicate gayety was infectious.

"Ah! yes, indeed; how could I forget?" cried she, snatching at a balloon of colored paper, hanging to the tree. She tore it open, and rapidly conveyed one of the sugar-plums to her mouth, "Oh! this is nice; have some?"

Mr. Brittain helped himself, absently. He was thinking

of the note and Mr. Thorne in the belfry, and wondering how Harry could look so innocent and happy with that note in her pocket.

"Stuff that into your pocket," said she, forcing the balloon into his hand; "there is something else for you to do. Reach up there to that high branch, and undo that little bundle tied with a red ribbon; not that one, further still, there!"

Mr. Brittain brought down the bundle.

"Now open it! open it!" cried she, gleefully.

Mr. Brittain could not receive a present with the easy grace of his friend Ralph. He was very much embarrassed; his hands trembled as he untied the package, for he thought it was from Harry. And had it been a piece of her handiwork, he would have been made very happy thereby, but when the massive gold pen was brought to light, he was so confused and disappointed that he let it fall.

"Miss Vane," he stammered, "this was quite unexpected; it is very handsome; you are very kind to remember me."

"But it was not I," said Harry; "it was my uncle and aunt."

"Harry's love!" shrieked a harsh, discordant voice. Mr. Brittain gave a violent start, and dropped the pen a second time.

"*Ah! voila, il parle!*" cried Harry, clapping her hands with childish delight, and bursting into the familiar language of her school-days. "*Que j'en suis bien aise!*"

"A parrot!" said Mr. Brittain. "How he startled me!"

"Sit down," said Harry, "and I will bring him to you." She went to the table in the corner, snatched up the cage, and running back to Mr. Brittain, she rested it on the arm of his chair.

"*Vous connaissez-vous en perroquets, Monsieur?*" said she, gayly. "Is he not a beauty? It is for Janet. I wrote to Mrs. Bloomfield, Aunt Eleanor's sister, who lives at Foxley, to engage me one of a bird-fancier there, and to have him taught to say that. It came this morning, and Mrs. Bloomfield wrote word that he could say a great many things, which is a very desirable thing in a parrot. For you know," she added, with simple gravity, "a parrot that cannot talk is of no manner of use?"

"Harry's love!" screamed the bird.

"He said that very distinctly," said Mr. Brittain.

"I wish he would say something else, now. He has not spoken since he arrived until just now."

"*Pensez à moi*," said the parrot.

"Oh! is not that nice?" cried Harry.

"He acquits himself wonderfully," said Mr. Brittain.

"Do you think it will make Janet happy?"

"I have no doubt of it."

"And are you happy?" she asked suddenly, pained by his grave face.

"I am troubled," he said sadly. "I want to ask you a question."

"Well!" said she, dubiously.

"Did you tell your aunt about that miniature?"

"Yes, I told her, and she told me not to do so again."

"Oh! Miss Vane! And yet you received a note from Mr. Thorne this evening?"

"Indeed I did not," said she indignantly.

"Who was that in the belfry?"

"It was Lonely Tony!" said she, with a laugh. "You know I believe in ghosts?"

"Then what was Lonely Tony's Christmas message to you?" said he, trying to smile.

"I cannot tell you," said she, covering her face with her hands. "Please do not ask me anything about that!"

"I do not wish you to tell me; but do not keep it a secret from your uncle and aunt."

"There is no secret to keep — of my own," she said, a little impatiently. "You make me very uncomfortable this Christmas Eve."

"I beg your pardon. I am very inconsiderate. Let us part friends."

Harry extended her hand promptly. She was very sorry for Mr. Brittain.

"I wish she had not given me this pen," thought Mr. Brittain, as he walked away. "I should like to go there to-morrow night."

On the church-steps sat Mr. Kennett; he had taken Marcia home and was waiting for his friend.

"Well!" he cried, as soon as Mr. Brittain came within hearing, "I have just seen Nick Bayne carry the 'ghost' off in a state of 'tipsication,' as Grace Innibee would say. It was Mr. Thorne in the belfry."

Yes," said Mr. Brittain.

"Harry told you?"

"No; why should she tell me?"

"Exactly," said his friend, striking him on the shoulder; "why should either of them tell us anything about it?"

"It was Miss Fletcher whom he was waiting to see," said Mr. Brittain.

"It was Miss Harry Vane," said Mr. Kennett. And they parted, each fearing that the other was right.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

CONFIDENTIAL.



THE Christmas week passed amid the usual festivities. Very few attended Harry's Christmas tree, as every one naturally desired to be at home on that day; but it was a grand affair for the servants, who of course were remembered on the occasion, and the Poinsett children who had never seen such a thing as a Christmas tree before. Harry had determined to have them at all hazards, from the moment she heard Miss Edna threaten them with the shocking sacrilege of a composition on the universal holiday. The children appreciated the compliment, and behaved very well; and Harry was, in truth, as she had said to Mr. Brittain, as "happy as a bird."

But at Four-Oaks, Christmas was not the merry anniversary it proved to be elsewhere in Netherford. To the inmates of the old brick house it was a quiet, almost a sad day; for all felt, though none gave the unwelcome thought utterance, that it was Janet's last Christmas on earth. Happily the child's mind was diverted from this thought by Harry's wonderful parrot. But Marcia had a cause for dissatisfaction in Mr. Kennett's absence. It is true she had not invited him, yet he was so much in the habit of coming

in without ceremony, that she half thought, and wholly hoped he would come on Christmas Day. But the week wore away, and he did not come; and the New Year set in with its new prospects, its new hopes, its new joys, and alas! that it must be written, its disappointments and its sorrows as well, and still nothing was seen of Mr. Kennett. He bade farewell to the Old, and welcomed the New Year on a sick bed. A violent cold he had contracted on Christmas Eve kept him a close prisoner at Mrs. Marshall's where he always took his Christmas dinner. He was missed in the gay crowds that assembled to celebrate the season, but there were others to take his place, and his friend Sylvo was the only one who visited him. He was able to sit up at the end of a week, though, as he told Mr. Brittain, his Aunt's anxiety about him was so great that he was not only debarred from looking out of the window, which certainly afforded no prospect, but was likely to starve to death on beef-tea and crackers, as she would not allow him any substantial fare.

"How I do wish," said he, "that it were not improper for young ladies to visit their invalid friends. That merry little cricket, Harry Vane, would refresh me wonderfully. She could tell me all that has been going on these Christmas times, which you cannot; it is impossible to learn anything from you. Between you and Aunt Marshall I am like to starve to death, physically and intellectually. Now Harry, I am sure, would smuggle me in some decent fare, and tell me a world of news and fun beside. I do wish you would marry her and bring her to see me."

The color rose to Mr. Brittain's forehead. "Ralph, you ought not to talk such nonsense," said he.

"You abominable book-worm!" said his friend. "Do you not want to marry her!"

"She is not thinking of me," said Mr. Brittain, with a sigh.

"No, I will answer for it she is not! And what is more, she does not suspect that you are thinking of her."

"Ralph," said Mr. Brittain, looking up suddenly, "you ought not talk to her about me."

"But she talks to me about you. Do not be alarmed, old fellow," he continued, as he saw Mr. Brittain's expression of uneasiness; "I will leave it for you to open her eyes of course; unless you are too everlasting slow about it. That fellow Middleton is making headway."

"He is?" said Mr. Brittain, looking up.

"Oh! he has such opportunities," said Mr. Kennett, slyly, "and he will be immensely wealthy."

"Do you think she could be influenced by that?"

"I do not know," said Mr. Kennett, "'maidens like moths,' you know. And there is nothing to counteract his influence."

Mr. Brittain sighed, and with his eyes on the dying embers he built a castle in the air, quite as glorious as any Harry had ever reared. The lonely hours of study were enlivened by a presence that cast a glow upon the page. A lively fancy, a burning enthusiasm interpreted the authors that he read, a voice of exquisite melody chanted the lays he loved, and made perpetual music in his home. In all the vision never once did he see Harry in any domestic occupation. She had never seemed to him other than the spirit of some rainbow-illuminated hour; how could he fancy her among the pots and pans? And yet, poor Harry? how her indignant heart would have rebelled at the omission of these domestic details!

"Sylvo, what in the world do you sit there so moping for?"

The unreal vision fled at the sound of Mr. Kennett's voice.

"I was dreaming," said Mr. Brittain, "and I have awaked."

"Act man, act!" said his friend, "lose no time in dreams."

"Ah! but," said Mr. Brittain, "I am not wealthy at all, and Miss Vane is" —

"*Ricca e bella.  
E cortese a chiunque vi venia.*"

chanted Mr. Kennett, "if you want an elegant and appropriate quotation. This is all nonsense, Sylvo, and none but a goose like you would stumble at that. Have you heard anything of Mr. Thorne?"

"No, why should I care about Mr. Thorne?"

"No indeed! why should you? Miss Vane is a contemptible, frivolous, giddy-headed, ignorant" —

"Ralph, do not talk so!" said Mr. Brittain.

"Then I will change the key. I tell you she is a mystery — a wonderful, beautiful mystery, and she and Marcia, between them, are enough to drive a man crazy. What in the world do they both see in Mr. Thorne?"



"I have no right to question," said Mr. Brittain.

"Fudge! you know your heart is giving you the lie now this very moment. Every man has a right to inform himself about what concerns his own happiness, and I tell you I mean to find out all I can. There is something incomprehensible in it! whenever that Thorne tumbles down dead drunk in the gutter, Nick Bayne is always on hand to pick him up; Nick Bayne hides him in the belfry of St. Botolf's, and Nick Bayne hands Harry a note, which Harry hands to Marcia. Curious young ladies! to be trusting their precious secrets to Nick Bayne."

"Did Harry — did Miss Vane give that note to Miss Fletcher?" asked Mr. Brittain.

"Yes, I saw her do it. But she will read it, — she has read it, no doubt, long before now. With my limited light on the subject I do not see how Mr. Thorne is to avoid committing bigamy. I don't like it. Making all charitable allowances for the sowing of wild oats, I must say that this young man is a long time 'pitching his crop,' for some of his enterprises are beneath the dignity of a Sophomore, and he belongs to the irregular band. He must be twenty-two or three, and the strangest part of the story is, that nobody knows who he is. I once asked Marcia before her father who he was, and she turned deadly pale, while Mr. Fletcher flew into a rage, said he was a curse, and asked if he ever came to the house. Marcia said no, and he looked at her very sternly, and said, "See that he never comes; you know the conditions." I saw it was a sore subject, and of course I apologized. But I keep going there, though I say every now and then that I will go no more."

"What are you going to do?" said Mr. Brittain.

"Ah! there it is," said his friend with a short laugh. "You are obliged to go there just as usual, and I suppose I shall go because you do; why should I not share your dangers, eh, Oh! friend of my youth?"

"Miss Fletcher always avoids the subject of Mr. Thorne, and Miss Vane never does," said Mr. Brittain, with an unconscious triumph in his tone very irritating to his friend.

"Oh! well, they are very different girls," said he, impatiently. "Who is that keeping that eternal racket at the door?"

"Me, Mars Ralph," said Jerry, poking in his woolly head; "here's somebody done sont you a Chris'mas gif'."

"Bring it in then," said Mr. Kennett. "That is changing the subject very agreeably."

Jerry threw open the door with a flourish, and Phebe entered, bearing a silver waiter heaped with delicacies, and handed Mr. Kennett a little note from Mrs. Fanning — such a note as only Mrs. Fanning could write.

"Put your waiter down, Phebe," said Mr. Kennett; "and get me pen, ink, and paper, Jerry; I must answer this note."

He rapidly wrote an answer, gave it to Phebe, and as soon as the servants were gone, he threw Mrs. Fanning's note to Mr. Brittain, saying,

"Don't you wish you were sick?"

The note was not much, but the postscript from Harry was as if she had stepped into the room and spoken to them.

"I thought you had run away to be married," she wrote, "but Grace Innibee told me this morning that you have been sick. I am so sorry. Look under the basket of fruit and you will see something I send you from my Christmas-tree; some bonbons to keep you from saying 'bad! bad!' when you take that 'nasty physic.' Was Santa Claus good to you?"

"I will make you a present of that note," said Mr. Kennett, as Mr. Brittain pored over it, oblivious of everything else. "I have offered you an orange twice, but you cannot hear me."

Mr. Brittain, very much confused, laid the note hastily on the table.

"Keep it, keep it," said Mr. Kennett. "When Marcia writes you a note, you can return the favor." Greatly to his amusement, Mr. Brittain took the note, in his confusion, and put it in his pocket.

"Sylvo," said Mr. Kennett, as his friend rose to take his leave, "if Harry Vane is so frank about Mr. Thorne, go to her and find out all about it. I have asked her, and I am no wiser than I was before."

But Mr. Brittain would not promise. He was not able to maintain his composure when he spoke of Mr. Thorne to Harry. Beside, he thought, why should he trouble her; he had warned her, and every one knew Mr. Thorne's character. What right had he to control her actions; her wealth was forever in his way, and he must cease to think of her. But, poor fellow! when he saw her two or three times a

week under the most enchanting circumstances, how could he help thinking of her ?

Late that evening as Mr. Kennett sat admiring the dainties Mrs. Fanning had prepared for him so lavishly, there came a lumbering, creaking tread on the stair, as of very new boots on very weary feet. Shortly after there was a knock at his door, and upon permission being given to enter, it was jerked open, and in came Mr. Dunbar. He was dressed in the most elaborate and conspicuous manner ; his claret-colored coat glittered with brass buttons ; his blue pantaloons, and his vest, gorgeous with sea-green palm leaves, looked as fresh as a spring morning. But cold as was the weather, Mr. Dunbar was in a profuse perspiration.

" Well ! " he exclaimed, bouncing into a chair, " You advised me, you know, and I've done it, and a nice pucker I've made of it ! A more outrageous little monkey I never saw."

Mr. Kennett dimly guessed at what he meant.

" Laughed at me, sir !. yes, sir ! " said the Discarded, puffing and blowing, and wiping his face with his white silk handkerchief. " Laughed aloud at me ! the — the — the — Jezebel ! " he cried explosively, shaking his fist in the air. " I should like to know what there is in me to laugh at ? "

Mr. Kennett began to understand. " Who laughed at you, " Mr. Dunbar ? Pray explain yourself."

" Don't you see the pains I've taken ? " said Mr. Dunbar, spreading out his hands, and looking admiringly at his gaudy toilette. " And I went to more pains than that. I knew them Fannings were such grandees, sorter, so up to snuff, you know, about proprieties and all that, I wouldn't run the risk of making any mistake. I was determined, you see, to do the thing up brown. I got a book and I made it my study for a week, the properest way to approach a lady on the delicate subject of matrimony. I went there this afternoon, attired as you see, faultlessly, and down she come, fresh as a rose. I didn't dream of gettin' my walking-ticket no how, and everything went on like sliding over ice, till somehow she didn't answer as I looked for, and I got put out. I made some unlucky trip, d— it ; and there ain't no mistake about it, but those Fannings are graduated in etiquette ! she gave me the right word now, you never saw ! But soon as she did it, she put up her hand to hide a

smile, and I couldn't stand that ; I made such a bungle, and she just laughed, she couldn't talk for laughing, and right then and there this perspiration broke out on me, and it's kept up ever since. I told her I didn't admire her manners, but it didn't seem to make her mad one bit. Confound it ! why ain't she got a brother I can thrash, for her laughing at me ? ”

“ She has an uncle about your age,” said Mr. Kennett, hardly able to keep from laughing himself.

“ Mr. Fanning is a respectable man and a worthy citizen,” said Mr. Dunbar, cooling somewhat ; “ she is evidently unwilling for it to get to his ears, for before I came away she begged my pardon. I thanked her, and told her that I wanted none of her pardon. You needn't laugh, I can tell you, she'd ha' done you the same way, for she's a tip-top coquette with a temper at the bottom. Edna Poinsett hinted as much to me long ago. And since you advised me to go and try my luck in that quarter so freely, I'll give you better advice than that ; don't you go a nigh her, — unless you want to get yourself laughed at. The outrageous deceiver ! I thank my stars I'm done with her ! And the curioest thing of all is there is your friend Sylvo, as you call him, can get along so smooth with her. I took him for a learned man, but now you wouldn't believe it, but when I asked him to recommend me an etiquette book he said he had never read one ! Would you believe it ? She'll laugh at *him* some day if he don't look sharp ! But mind now what I say, don't you go a nigh her ! ”

“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha ! ” laughed Mr. Kennett, when he was gone. “ I'll tell Harry Vane about this the very first time I see her. Hurra for Dr. Dunbar ! he has nearly cured me ! Why the devil was not Sylvo here to hear this tale ! ”

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## THE HOUR OF FATE.



R. MIDDLETON had been the Lion of Netherford ever since the "Shakespeare night;" but he was not content with distinguishing himself as a reader, he had been long agitating the subject of Private Theatricals. "Wait," Mrs. Fanning had said, "until Christmas is over;" and so, restraining his ardor, he did wait. But Christmas was now over, and he returned to the charge with renewed energy. He found the young ladies and gentlemen more than willing for the undertaking, and after several exciting discussions, a programme was finally made out and the parts distributed. Mrs. Fanning freely offered her house, which was freely accepted, and for two busy and exciting weeks the labor of preparation went on.

Miss Edna had predicted that Harry would weary of studying at Four-Oaks by Christmas, but she found herself mistaken; not even the theatrical novelty could keep her away from that attractive place. It is true she studied the parts assigned to her far more than she did the pages marked by Mr. Brittain, but the attraction at Four-Oaks was made up of such a variety of elements, that it would have taken a great deal to wean her from it. She was very fond of Mrs. Porter, she had an extravagant admiration for Marcia's beauty and talents, and her tender heart yearned over the dying Janet; Mr. Fletcher had inexhaustible stories of curiosities which she was never tired of looking over, and Mr. Brittain had kept up the practice instituted by Mr. Kennett of reading something to instruct and amuse every day. Harry had not the critical or the cultivated taste of the others; she admired, she knew not why, but she admired with her whole heart; the beauties were mag-

nified to her, the defects invisible. And yet she did not admire indiscriminately, she often differed from them all. But her enthusiasm where she did admire, was so intense, her interest so absorbing, that Mr. Brittain now never read a fine poem without wondering what Harry would *feel* about it, while he asked himself less often what would Marcia *think*. The readings were resumed with the first week of the New Year, and Mr. Kennett came, as he had said, to share his friend's danger. With renewed health he felt renewed confidence in Marcia, and Mr. Thorne was in a measure forgotten.

"Well now! it is delightful here, but I must go," said Harry. She was at Four-Oaks, the lesson was over, 'Ye Rime of ye Ancient Marinere' had been read, and the apples and nuts upon the table had been merrily discussed, and Marcia and Mr. Brittain sat laughing at Harry's and Mr. Kennett's lively comments upon the Society of Netherford.

"Why must you go," said Mr. Kennett, "when you are amusing us all here? You know if you go back, Mr. Middleton will bore you to death with his Theatricals."

"Theatricals, sir! That is why I must hurry back. To-morrow-night, you know, is to be the *night of nights!*" She had tied on her hood, but she threw herself again into her chair. "Oh dear! the posture-making, the studying of effect, the arranging of drapery, and the everlasting rehearsing! Everybody can truly say 'I'm not myself at all!' Mr. Middleton and Miss Sallie Hart are to act in the *Lady of Lyons*. Mr. Middleton wanted me to be Pauline, but we differed, in fact we quarrelled, about the manner in which Pauline should repeat her part; so Sallie, who is very complacent, consented to take my place. Mr. Sutton is to be Charles XII. *arrachant la couronnet*, like an ill-bred bear as he is — was — Charles XII., I mean. Then Romeo and Juliet in the Balcony Scene, Mr. 'Faintly Fades' and Miss Minnie Lorrimer, that pretty girl visiting at President Jones?"

"'Mr. Faintly Fades &'" said Mr. Brittain puzzled.

"Yes," said Harry; "do you not know? Mr. Paul; did you never read his sonnet to the evening star?"

"Faintly fades yon fading star," quoted Mr. Kennett.

"Now he did not!" said Harry. "It is not as bad as that; it is 'Faintly fades yon evening star.'"

"Miss Vane you should not give nicknames," said Mr. Brittain.

"Oh!" said Mr. Kennett, "that is nothing; you ought to hear what she calls you."

"Hush!" said Harry.

Mr. Brittain turned very red, but certainly her face was as red as his.

"She calls you Mr. Moral Philosopher," said Mr. Kennett, not heeding her prohibition.

"That is not such a very bad name, is it?" said Harry.

Mr. Brittain laughed. "It is not very hard to bear," he said, good-humoredly.

"Go on," said Mr. Kennett, "give us the whole programme."

"Oh! you know the programme as well as I."

"But my memory fails me in some points."

"Well I am to be Katharine to Mr. Middleton's Petruccio, and I rather like that, it is such a good chance to blaze away at him. And I am to sing *Casta Diva* in character, with a chaplet of oak-leaves on my head" —

"Like that" — interrupted Mr. Brittain suddenly, and stopped short.

"Yes, like a Priestess of the Druids, of course," said Harry. She perfectly understood that he alluded to the miniature, but when he stopped she thought that he would rather avoid the mention of Mr. Thorne, a disagreeable subject to both Miss Fletcher's admirers, and she took great credit to herself for the manner in which she had evaded it, little dreaming of the construction put upon her prompt rejoinder by Mr. Brittain.

"And Fiddle Sticks Middleton, you know F. S. Middleton, is to sing 'Bachelor's Hall.'"

"Why do you not have that as a tableau?" said Mr. Kennett. "I could recommend two excellent individuals to act in it."

"Ah! I know you are thinking of Mr. Dunbar," said Harry.

"Yes, and of Sylvo, too; what do you think I found on his mantel-piece the other day, Miss Harry? A rotten apple!"

Mr. Brittain looked very much embarrassed, but Harry burst into a hearty laugh.

"Did you forget to eat it?"

"I suppose he thought it too pretty to eat," said Mr. Kennett. "But I can tell you something better than that about him; you would not suspect him of so much romance, but he actually does keep"—

"Ralph?" said Mr. Brittain, in so forbidding a voice his friend thought it better not to mention the chessman he kept among his valuables. And Harry quite forgot all about the Theatricals in thinking about Mr. Brittain's early love-affair. "Why do you not go on?" she said to Mr. Kennett.

"Do you not hear how he is growling at me? I am afraid to go on."

"Is he angry?" asked she, in a whisper, "or is he hurt?"

Mr. Brittain heard her and laughed, and then they all laughed merrily, though Harry fancied that Mr. Brittain's laughter was forced.

"But, about the tableaux, Miss Harry," said Mr. Kennett. "You have not told us all about them?"

"Listen to Mr. Vanity!" cried Harry. "He expects to appear in the tableaux. Do not be alarmed, they will be interspersed. Ting-a-ling-a-ling!" she continued gayly, ringing an imaginary bell with her gloved hand. "Rise curtain, and disclose Conrad and Medora, Mr. Kennett, and Miss Fletcher. These affairs are a world of trouble, and very demoralizing, but I candidly acknowledge them to be highly improving. I have acquired quite a respectable smattering of things in general within the last few weeks."

"You are flying the track, Miss Harry!" said Mr. Kennett. "Your modesty is highly commendable, but the tableau I am most interested in is the one you have been rehearsing."

"Which one? I am in several, you know."

"January and May."

"There is no such tableau on the programme," she answered simply.

"Miss Harry! Miss Harry;" said Mr. Kennett, shaking his finger at her, "you know you have been rehearsing that tableau with Mr. Dunbar."

"No such thing!" said Harry, blushing slightly; "Mr. Dunbar does not act"—

"No, he can not learn his part perfectly," said Mr. Kennett in great glee, "and you will laugh when you prompt



him. Miss Harry you know you have been rehearsing with Mr. Dunbar."

"I have not!" said Harry, very much confused, and yet laughing. "Who told you anything about it?"

"Why, he did himself; and he told me that you laughed at him when he offered to make you mistress of that remarkable bachelor's establishment beyond the Ominihaw. To think you should laugh at him when he had taken every pains to do the thing in style, — when he learned his speech by heart! What book he found it in I am unable to say, but he gives you more credit for learning than he does Mr. Brittain, for that gentleman did not know of any etiquette book to recommend."

"That accounts for his asking me!" exclaimed Mr. Brittain.

"By his own confession he got hold of some 'Cupid's Solicitor for Love,' and cruel Miss Harry was only moved to laughter."

Harry hid her face on the table and laughed, but presently raising it she exclaimed, —

"Well! how could I help it? Even Marcia would have laughed. He actually did learn his part from a little book called 'Lessons in Courtship.' Last winter at Mme. Camballat's, Mollie Davis brought it to school. It is a very useful book to gentlemen, no doubt; there are alternate examples of acceptance and rejections in very spirited dialogues, adapted to every case. We girls decided that it was a subject too much neglected in our school, so we made Mollie Davis Professor of Courtship and Matrimony, as she had already had two offers, it was said. We used to recite from this book every Saturday; it was very fine fun, I assure you. And Mr. Dunbar uses the same book; he had chosen the most grandiloquent example out of the whole twenty-four, and I happened to remember it, so I answered from the book, the temptation was irresistible. We went on very smoothly for a while, indeed quite glibly; but unfortunately Mr. Dunbar had chosen the 'acceptance,' and I the 'rejection,' and my answers put him out. He stumbled in the most moving part of his speech and I prompted, and he snatched at the word so eagerly I put my hand up that he might not see me smile, and that put him out, and he went away back and began over again. I could not help it, I laughed so I could not speak, and he was so angry! He

said he meant to tell my uncle, and I all the while was dying to tell somebody; but now that I have told, I am half sorry."

They were all laughing, and she had laughed herself as she told it, but now her face was grave, almost sad, as she sat absently twisting an apple-paring on the table.

"Ah! Miss Harry," said Mr. Kennett, "this is the way you do when a man puts his fate in your hands; you laugh at him while his heart is bleeding with his cruel wounds."

"Oh! do not! do not!" she said, with a little impatient gesture of her hand. "There was never a heart without a language of its own."

"You want an improvisatore, then — an impassioned strain of eloquence, 'thoughts that breathe and words that burn?'" said Mr. Kennett, mockingly.

"Nonsense," said Harry.

"You would have no patience with a lover who stammers and turns pale in his fearful struggles to confess his attachment."

"Now," said Harry, "it is hardly worth while to answer you — you know better. For the man who stammers and turns pale would be far more likely to be thinking of me, than the man so full of the effect he is to make that he can coolly sit down and study his part. How could such a heart give one throb generous enough to choke him as he spoke?"

"That is capital!" cried Mr. Kennett, laughing heartily. "Pray go on."

"Now you are laughing at me!" cried Harry, angrily.

"No, no!" said he. "Besides you cannot think that Mr. Brittain and Miss Marcia are laughing at you, they have hardly indulged in the ghost of a smile."

"Oh! well," she answered, recovering her good humor, "I deserve to be laughed at for talking so much nonsense."

"Nonsense? It is a serious business! Come now, Miss Harry, give us a clearly defined idea of the manner in which a man should act under such circumstances; we all know you have had experience."

"Oh! hush!" said she, laughing, and blushing. "I must go!" She rose and turned toward the door, lingering as she reached it, and saying, "I only know that there is an hour in the future for us all; the hour of our dreams, the hour of fate. Do not you remember, Mr. Brittain, how Asia, in the cave of Demogorgon, saw the cars of the 'im-

mortal Hours?' And so it seems to me there is an hour awaits us all. I cannot tell what mine may bring me, but when it comes I shall know it, my soul will know, even before a word is spoken. And whatever the words, I may tremble, but I will not laugh!"

Her face was radiant with a dreamy light as she spoke, but the light in her eyes did not fade when she finished her little romance, it only changed its character. The color in her cheeks deepened, and she laughed and said,

"I am the silliest girl in Netherford!" And closing the door she ran out of the house.

The canary bird in its cage applauded her exit with a shrill and brilliant song. Marcia was more beautiful than Harry, Mr. Kennett was fully as merry, the fire leaped up with a bright blaze, and the broad sun, bursting from behind a wintry cloud, sent a stream of light through the high window upon the silver and old-fashioned china on the table. But to Mr. Brittain it was as if a light had gone out. Her words had fallen like a spell upon her hearers; they sat silent until the hickory log, burning in two, sent a shower of sparks up the broad chimney. Then Mr. Kennett, striking his fist in the palm of his left hand, exclaimed.

"Rise Sylvo! thou canst not tell what an hour may bring forth!"

Slowly Mr. Brittain rose, like one in pain. He had no idea of turning the hour to his own account, but looking at his friend he saw Fate within his eyes, and through the same door, down the cold hall, out on the little porch where Harry's fleet steps had passed before, he went. Fantastic clouds were sailing over a wintry sky, the rough wind rushed over the yellow broom-straw on the hills, and dashed the leaves about his feet. Swiftly over the Terrace a light and graceful figure was hurrying away to Fanning House. He stood and watched her long. Confused and painful thoughts crowded to his mind; he thought of the grace, the passion, the enthusiasm which at times possessed her to such a degree that the influence she had over him was like witchcraft. And then he remembered Mr. Thorne, and the belfry of St. Botolf's, the note, the self-possessed evasion of the allusion to the miniature only a little half-hour ago. And while he pondered there until long after Harry had disappeared from his sight, there came forth from the porch of Four-Oaks into the fast gathering twilight, one as pale as

himself. The Hour of Fate had brought him disappointment, Mr. Brittain correctly surmised, and went away, while Mr. Kennett, surprised to see him there, muttered to himself as he saw him quickly walk away, —

“There is surely a spell upon this place; Sylvo loves Harry, and I love Marcia, and *they* love Mr. Thorne; and yet they seem to hold us by a spell neither of us can break. I have said I will come here no more, but I know I shall. I will go down and tell Aunt Marshall all about it.”

And Marcia, bolted within her room, spent the long watches of the night in tears. Of all the merry group assembled around the fire at Four-Oaks that afternoon, Harry alone went home light-hearted and happy; Harry alone went, with her eyes closed, to happy dreamland, and awoke in the morning without a care.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE BRACELET.



ARRY had not exaggerated when she described the zeal of the amateur actors and actresses. Great was the furor for Private Theatricals with which Mr. Middleton had inspired the people of Netherford, and incalculable were the heart-burnings and jealousies engendered during the preparation for the all-important night at Mrs. Fanning's. At all entertainments there is more or less of “envy, hatred and malice” displayed, and more particularly at those where talent is called into play. In a concert or a tableau-party, in the acting of the most terrific tragedy or the most exquisite comedy, the dearest friends have been known to quarrel. And they quarrelled on this occasion. The “fiery souls” of Mr. Middleton's Thespian Corps were near “fretting their pigmy bodies to decay;” and it was owing to his indomitable

energy, and Mrs. Fanning's incomparable tact and diplomacy that the undertaking did not fall through. But envy, hatred, and malice, attended every rehearsal, pronounced opinions at the final enactment of the whole, and sat in judgment long after the affair was forgotten by all but those concerned therein.

Mr. Middleton had the chief direction: he was stage manager, prompter, general adviser, master-of-the-ropes, and star-actor. Poor Mr. Sutton, who had hitherto enjoyed the supremacy in such affairs, was degraded to the rank of "second fiddle," as Mr. Fanning expressed it. However, he contrived by flattering his rival to get himself appointed to some posts of considerable honor and responsibility. Owing to the great number of performers, it became necessary to intersperse some songs and tableaux in order that each might have a part. Harry was a frequent victim to the fickleness of the different actors, so that Mrs. Fanning really feared she would not know her part. "Never mind," said Harry, carelessly, "I can invent."

Fanning House was admirably adapted for such an entertainment: a stage was erected in the back parlor with curtains and foot-lights, and a few shifting scenes; the sliding doors were pushed back, and the spectators occupied both rooms. The young ladies made use of Mrs. Fanning's room across the hall to dress in, while the gentlemen retired to a small apartment in the wing back of the parlors. Phebe and Judy were both in attendance upon the ladies on the night in question, while Tom and Jackson waited upon the gentlemen, and all the other Fanning domestics stood round, ready to give everything but their eyes for an opportunity of waiting on the company.

Neither actors nor spectators cared to be late on this occasion. Miss Dalrymple, however, was the first arrival. She came at six, and sat listening to Mrs. Fanning in her own room: for Mrs. Fanning, bright and smiling as she looked, had some grievances to relate. But she was soon interrupted by a crowd of girls coming in muffled in nubias and opera-cloaks. They chattered like blackbirds, and Harry, as charmingly hospitable as a child, ran hither and thither, offering assistance. In a little while the room looked as if it had been touched by a fairy's wand: gay dresses of every color and fashion scattered about, gorgeous plumes and gaudy sashes displayed, and the various young

ladies were being rapidly transformed into Fairies and Cinderellas, Paulines and Juliets, Gypsies and Indians.

Mrs. Fanning was in the parlor, Miss Dalrymple at the piano, when Mr. Middleton, having satisfied himself that his dress was perfect, crossed the hall, followed by the admiring gaze of the servants, and knocked at the door of the young ladies' dressing-room.

"Who is that?" cried the motley chorus within.

Mr. Middleton partly opened the door, and discreetly turning his back to the aperture, said,

"All ready? Half-past seven; the bell will ring. Pauline, are you ready?"

"How glad I am that I am not Pauline!" said Harry to herself.

"Ready in one minute!" cried Miss Hart. "Here, somebody, do clasp this bracelet!" And in great trepidation she disappeared. A moment more, and the bell rang.

"Girls!" cried Harry, snatching a shawl to hide her Cinderella dress, "you can do as you please, but I am going to see all that is to be seen."

Followed by one or two she ran across the hall, and got in among the spectators just as Mr. Middleton was heard to say behind the curtain,

"Clear the stage!"

Miss Dalrymple had been playing all the while, but in the universal hubbub not a note was heard, until as the second bell rang, the brilliant finale of the *Last Rose of Summer* fell upon the ear, and the curtain rose and discovered Melnotte and Pauline.

Harry looked and listened breathlessly, all unaware that she was an object of wondering amusement to Mr. Brittain, who while watching her neither saw nor heard Melnotte or Pauline. Her clumsy wrapping could not hide the whole of Cinderella's coarse brown dress, but she looked far more unconscious of her blanket shawl and her short skirts, than did Pauline of her satin train. As soon as the scene was over, while the room still rang with the plaudits of an indulgent audience, she darted away to the dressing-room; "Pauline" was there before her, trembling with excitement, and begging to know how she had acquitted herself, affirming that she neither knew nor saw a thing after she mounted the stage. And yet she was the only person who could say positively that Mr. Kennett was in the house, although he did not come with her.

"Then I wonder where Marcia is!" exclaimed Harry.

"Really, Harry, you are wonderfully wrapped up in that Marcia," said Miss Hart, snappishly.

Harry deigned no reply, but rushing to the door, this time without her shawl, she crossed the hall, and was entering the back parlor when Mr. Middleton stopped her.

"This is against all rule," said he, laying no very gentle hand on her arm; "you must not appear in your stage dress, indeed you must not appear at all except on the stage; you will fail in producing the proper effect."

Harry did not like his authoritative manner. "Let me go!" cried she. "What do I care?"

"You must not! I forbid!"

"I will not mind you!" said she, struggling. "Let me go!"

"Harry, you shall not go into that parlor!" said Mr. Middleton, angrily.

"How dare you?" cried Harry, in a passion. "I will go into that parlor!"

"It is out of all rule," repeated Mr. Middleton; "and if you do not go back I shall be offended."

"I am offended now!" cried Harry. "If you do not let go my arm I will not go upon your hateful old stage at all!"

The door of the back parlor opened while this was going on, and those standing near might have beheld a scene as spirited as any performed on the boards that night; for Harry was in her little short brown Cinderella dress, and Mr. Middleton in a white satin doublet trimmed with blue and silver and elaborate lace ruffles, knee breeches of black velvet, white silk stockings, sash and sword, and jaunty crimson cap with a sweeping white plume. But the only witness was Mr. Brittain, who stepping up to them asked if he could be of any service.

"Yes," said Harry; "make him let me go!"

Mr. Middleton took his hand from her arm.

"Where is Mr. Kennett?" asked Harry of Mr. Brittain.

"He is here; I saw him a moment ago."

"But where is Marcia?"

"Is she not here?" said Mr. Brittain, in surprise.

"No."

"Ralph," said he, beckoning to Mr. Kennett, who immediately came forward, "is not Miss Fletcher coming?"

Mr. Middleton turned on his heel with an insulted air and walked away ; but the three did not miss him.

"Of course she is coming!" said Harry, impatiently ; "she is in several tableaux, we are obliged to have her."

"She declined coming with me," said Mr. Kennett, coldly.

"Then Mr. Brittain, do you take the carriage and go for her, please?" said Harry, laying a beseeching hand on his arm.

"Let me stay until Cinderella appears," pleaded he.

"No, no! go now, right now," she said, giving him a little push. Mr. Brittain disappeared, but he did not go for Marcia until Cinderella's three scenes were over ; for the bell rang as she pushed him away, and she herself flew at full speed to the dressing-room. She did not see Mr. Brittain as she sat sifting the ashes and singing a melancholy ditty ; her heart was in the song as truly as if she had been Cinderella's veritable self, and how pretty was her childish delight when the fairy godmother's magic wand changed her rags to the sheeny satin robe!

But her unconscious identification of herself with the character she was performing was all over when she touched the hand of the Prince, Mr. Middleton. Mr. Brittain saw it, and as soon as the curtain fell he hurried to the carriage and drove rapidly to Four-Oaks.

When Harry came down from the stage she was Cinderella no longer, she was Harry Vane. She remembered with a pang that Marcia had refused to come with Mr. Kennett, and that she had sent his rival for her. "Poor Mr. Kennett!" she thought, and as soon as she could see him she laid her hand on his arm and asked in the tenderest accents,

"What is the matter?"

"With me?" said Mr. Kennett, with a smile. "Nothing."

"Ah! but there is though!" He had been laughing and chatting very gayly behind the scenes, but Harry saw that it was affected gayety. "Why would not Marcia come with you?"

Mr. Kennett hesitated. "Let us talk about something else," he said.

"Was I wrong to send Mr. Brittain for her?"

"Certainly not, it was kind in you to send"—

"Romeo and Juliet!" shouted Mr. Middleton, and



Harry ran back to the dressing-room to look for Marcia. But Romeo and Juliet was over, and a song and a tableau followed before Mr. Brittain returned. At last, as she was anxiously peeping from the dressing-room door, she saw them enter the hall.

"Oh, Harry," said Marcia, "why did you send for me?"

"Why, indeed? Are you not to act in the tableaux here to-night?"

"But I sent you an excuse, and" —

"I did not get it, and if I had I should have sent for you all the same; you have no business to have an excuse."

"But I cannot explain — I told Mr. Kennett I could not come, and when you sent Mr. Brittain for me Mrs. Porter made me come."

"Mrs. Porter is a sensible woman, and you are a goose," said Harry, and pushing her into the room she ran off to act Katharine to Mr. Middleton's Petruchio. The vim with which she uttered her angry sentences, while it kept the audience in a perpetual laugh, quite put Mr. Middleton out; and even when he had tamed his wife for the nonce, he felt that she had the best of the bargain, and descended the stage not quite so elated as he had been when he acted Melnotte. But Harry was neither elated nor abashed; she was simply — done with it. Some privileged guests were admitted behind the scenes, and as she came down from the stage she saw Mr. Brittain standing with her aunt.

"My dear!" cried Mrs. Fanning, seizing her hand, and kissing her, "you did charmingly; but I must say you were rather too emphatic in your shrewishness. Poor Mr. Middleton! I am afraid you made him feel badly. You must make amends to him for it."

Harry laughed, but the next moment, as her aunt turned to Miss Dalrymple, she said to Mr. Brittain,

"Did I do so very badly? I do not mind at all making Mr. Middleton feel 'cut up,' but I would not like to make him feel so in public."

"What are you going to do to make amends?" said Mr. Brittain.

"Oh dear! — I do not know! I will tell him I was not Harry Vane, I was Katharine. I knew I should get into some trouble before this wonderful night should be over!"

"Harry," said Mrs. Fanning, "what are those tableaux Miss Edna has been arranging?"

"I do not remember ma'am," said Harry; "something about a nimble bungle, I believe."

Mr. Brittain laughed, and Harry ran away.

"Did you ever see such a child in your life, Mr. Brittain? What is the name of that old Teutonic romance, or epic, which do you call it? I cannot twist my tongue around its harsh title."

"Nibelungen Lay?" said Mr. Brittain.

"That is it; thank you. Harry was not so very far from it. It is the most provoking thing!" she continued to Miss Dalrymple; "it is all Edna Poinsett's doing; she sent word late yesterday afternoon that she had arranged these tableaux with great care, and rather insisted upon having them represented. There are not six people in the house, who, even when they are told, could understand them. Who knows anything about the marriage of '*Sieg Fried*,' and '*Chrimhild*,' and the death of '*Sieg Fried*?' I am sure I do not. Something had to be given up to make room for them, for the programme is already so long, so Harry gave up *Casta Diva*. I am particularly vexed about it, because there are some strangers here who wished very much to hear her sing it; but Harry does not seem to care at all. I believe it would have been very little disappointment to her to have been left out altogether, if she could be at liberty to see all that is to be seen."

The tableaux from the Nibelungen Lay were most elaborate, and, as Mrs. Fanning had predicted, understood by very few; but Miss Edna had the full credit of being an extremely erudite person, and the pleasure of talking about Scandinavian antiquities the rest of the evening.

It was quite impossible to prevail upon Marcia to act in the tableaux at all, and Harry was very indignant. But fortunately there were plenty who were willing to take her place, and Conrad found an insipid Medora in Miss Minnie Lorrimer, who also personated Rowena. The final representation, that is the nominally final one, was an Italian harvest scene, where the gentlemen appeared in knee breeches and fancy vests, steeple crowned hats stuck full of flowers, and the ladies wore short skirts trimmed with ribbons. It made a showy tableau, for the costumes were becoming to all, and Mr. Brittain, who had thought that the Cinderella dress made Harry look like an angel, found her more beautiful still in this gay attire. But when it was over Mr. Middle-

ton announced that it was customary to close with an impromptu: no matter what the dresses, the fun consisted in making the most of the characters they were already dressed for.

"Somebody suggest something!" cried he, throwing himself into a seat. "I confess I am at a loss."

"A schoolroom?" said Mr. Kennett.

"Good!" cried Harry, clapping her hands. "Mr. Brittain will you be the schoolmaster?"

She had not in the least expected him to comply, but he laughed, and said,

"I will with pleasure, Miss Vane."

"Oh! get him a switch! get him a switch," cried Harry, running about the stage in delightful excitement. "Somebody do get him a switch, for I *know* he will have to whip me!"

"He will do it without doubt, Miss Harry," said Mr. Kennett, "if you will let him kiss your hand afterward."

"Go away!" said she; "I will make him whip *you* if you do not behave. I have seen two very disagreeable people to-night, and I am vexed with you both; go!"

"Here is the switch, Miss Harry!" said Mr. Paul.

"We want a desk and some books," cried one.

"And benches!" said another.

"Oh! Mr. Middleton do tell me where I am to sit, and what I am to do?" said Miss Sally Hart.

Mr. Sutton began fabricating a dunce's cap, while Harry, raising a wig aloft upon the stout switch Mr. Paul had procured for her, begged Mr. Brittain to wear it. He complied, and settled it upon his head, amid roars of laughter. The laugh made the audience impatient; they began to importune for the curtain to be raised, but there was yet much to do before they could be ready. Harry thrust her head from behind the curtain and called out,

"Some kind somebody, do lend me some spectacles." Several pairs were handed her, and snatching the first which reached her hand she rushed back with them to Mr. Brittain. He patted her on the head and declared she was a troublesome scholar, but in the main a good little girl.

"What in the world has happened?" thought she. "Mr. Brittain and Mr. Kennett have exchanged characters."

"Who will wear the dunce's cap?" said Mr. Sutton. Nobody seemed inclined to accept it, so he offered it to Blanche; but Blanche drew back haughtily, saying,

"Excuse me, I am unwilling to make myself liable to such an imputation."

"Oh! shade of Miss Edna!" thought Harry; and coming out from the group around the desk, she said,

"Put it on me, I will wear it!"

Mr. Sutton stuck it on her head. It would seem as if some fairy had bestowed on her the power of being beautiful in every fantastic thing she wore, and strange as it might appear, this fascinated Mr. Brittain. In vain Reason told him that a girl so formed for scenes of gayety and brilliance was unsuited to a man devoted to so different a life; never did his heart plead so strongly for Harry as when he saw her inspired with this spirit of exquisite frolic: her keen enjoyment, her utter abandonment and self-forgetfulness, appeared to him none the less powerfully because he had outgrown much of his youthful ardor.

Perhaps it was because of the caress he had just bestowed upon her in his assumed character, and with which his fingers were still thrilling, that he turned a deaf ear to Reason, and dared obey the impulses of his heart: he looked at her, he admired her, he even dared to hope that the day might come when he might claim her; he did not once think of Mr. Thorne. Harry's merry brown eyes danced under her towering dunce's cap as she looked at him, and when her fellow-pupils laughed at the funny, pouting face she made, she caught her gay skirts in the tips of her fingers, and with a courtesy a danseuse might have envied, she said,

"Ladies and gentlemen, pray do not mistake me for Miss Harry Vane; I am only little Lottie Stupid, and I do not know my lesson." And rubbing her eyes with her fist she went to her seat, half concealing her face in her book.

"All ready?"

The bell rang, the curtain rose; Mr. Brittain heard one or two classes recite, reprimanded some unruly boys and shook his head at the "dunce." The impromptu was greatly applauded, the audience were delighted, but all the while, amid various expressions of commendation, Harry heard the question go round,

"Who is that child in the dunce's cap?"

Neither her uncle nor her aunt could answer the question, but Mr. Kennett whispered to some old lady,

"Do you not recognize Harry Vane?" And then it was told, and "the dunce," and "Harry Vane," and "is it pos-

sible !” she heard repeated again and again. The curtain fell amid rounds of applause, but Mr. Brittain, when he took off his spectacles, looked in vain for Harry. The dunce’s cap was on the floor, but she was gone ; whither could she have flown so quickly ?

“ Why Harry ! what is the matter ? ” cried her young friends as they crowded into the dressing-room, where Harry, seated on a low stool by the fire, was crying. “ Dear me, Harry, what has happened ? ” asked one and another.

“ Nothing ! ” said Harry. “ I hate to wash off the paint in cold water, and I am trying tears. ”

“ La ! Harry, do go and wash your face, you know we are to dance in costume ; there’s old Lester’s fiddle now ! ” Old Lester was the ball-manager of Netherford, that is to say he played the fiddle at all parties, and his music always set the heels and toes of Netherford to palpitating. The scraping of his fiddle-bow was like the playing of the Pied Piper ; in a twinkling the short-skirted damsels had flown like a flock of birds and Harry was left alone.

“ Miss Harry, ” said Phebe, “ isn’t you gwine to dance ? ”

“ Get me my checked silk ! ” said Harry, jumping up and unlacing her boddice.

“ Laws ! Miss Harry, you isn’t gwine to pull off dat pretty dress ? ”

“ Go ! ” said Harry, impatiently ; “ go do as I tell you ; bring me my checked silk ! ”

Phebe went, muttering to herself, “ Miss Harry is the most curiosist somebody to-be-shore ; what makes she can’t do like other folks ? ” While Harry, hastily washing her face and brushing her hair, said to herself, “ I am tired of being clown of the circus ! ”

Phebe reappeared with the checked silk, and Harry came forth of her chamber, beautiful still, but quiet and sedate. She wore no ornament but a little coral pin to fasten her lace collar, and a spray of scarlet geranium in her hair. She had not reached the parlor door when Mr. Brittain met her ; he was in search of her, he said, and wanted to dance with her.

Harry could not believe it. “ Dance with me ? ” she said.

“ Why not ? ” he answered coloring.

“ Oh ! I should be delighted, ” she replied ; “ but I never dreamed of such an honor. ”

Marcia and Mr. Sutton were their vis-a-vis, and Mr. Kennett sat moody and silent in a distant corner. Harry thought, as she glanced at him, "Ah! poor Mr. Kennett! here is Mr. Brittain so happy; one must sigh that the other may smile." And she sighed in hearty sympathy as she saw Mr. Brittain meet Marcia in the dance and make some gay reply to a question she had asked. Marcia was the same gentle and timid girl, but a change like a change in a fairy tale had come over Mr. Brittain and Harry. The wig he had worn seemed to have restored the lightness and gayety of youth, while with the dunce's cap Harry had thrown away her frolicsome spirits, and was as quiet and dignified as Marcia.

The set which they had joined were dancing in the back parlor, and as soon as it was over Harry seated herself upon the stage, from which the curtains had been looped back. Mr. Brittain took a seat by her side and presently came Mr. Sutton with Marcia.

"Oh! Miss Harry!" cried he, "are you going to be so selfish as to monopolize the whole stage?"

"No indeed," she returned; "here is plenty of room." And looking in that direction where Mr. Kennett sat forlorn she made a little sign which instantly brought him over. They chatted pleasantly enough, though Mr. Sutton did most of the talking, until the music began again, when he withdrew to find a partner. Neither Harry nor Marcia cared to dance again, so they remained sitting upon the edge of the stage, Harry talking, Mr. Brittain and Mr. Kennett replying, but Marcia silent and abstracted.

"Miss Vane," said Mr. Brittain, suddenly darting at something on the floor of the stage, "you have lost some of your geranium leaves."

"Have I?" said Harry, raising her hand to her head.

"No," said Marcia, "they are all there."

"It is a bracelet," said Mr. Brittain, turning very pale. He was not able to say another word, as he handed it to Harry.

She saw, before she took it in her hand, the curious bracelet, fashioned like oak-leaves of green enamelled gold, the very counterpart of that worn by the mysterious miniature.

"It is not mine," said she, simply. "Is it yours, Marcia?"

"No," said Marcia, coloring vividly.

Harry had not changed color at all, but had not Mr. Brittain seen her act several different characters that night? Mr. Kennett recognized the bracelet and asked to see it.

"Is it not curious?" said Harry. "Do you"—

"Is it yours?" said Mr. Kennett. He had heard her deny it, but he wanted to arrive at the truth.

"No," said Harry, "I do not know whose it is; some one must have dropped it here."

"Did you ever see it before; such a curious bauble?"

"No," said Marcia, in a low but steady tone, "I never did."

"Nor I," said Harry gayly; "but I have seen one like it."

"Perhaps it is the same," said Mr. Kennett, coldly.

"See if there is any name on it?" said Harry.

"There is a T," said Mr. Kennett, "that is all." He had started slightly when he saw the letter, and the other three were visibly excited when he announced it. He handed it to Marcia without another word.

"It is not mine," said she, in painful embarrassment.

"Give it to me," said Harry impetuously; "I mean to keep it until the owner is found." And she thrust it into her pocket. "And now let us be merry and gay!" she cried. But it would not do, the other three had no heart for merriment.

"If that bracelet does not belong to herself," thought Mr. Brittain, "why should she not wear it boldly on her arm until the owner is found? I cannot forget how she acted about the miniature."

"If that bracelet is not Marcia's," thought Mr. Kennett, "why should Harry try to secure it?"

It was precisely because Harry thought that it belonged to Marcia that she had put it in her pocket, but before she could find a private opportunity to ask her about it the owner appeared.

The ladies were putting on their cloaks and nubias, and for the first time since she had known them, Harry heard Miss Edna scolding Blanche. Blanche was crying, but nobody appeared to take any notice; Harry herself was passing them by without more than a glance of surprise, when she was arrested by Miss Edna's words,

"It will do no good to cry about it, Blanche, you ought not to leave the house until it is found. Your Aunt Theresa will be so *chagrinée*. Where did you have it last?"

"I do not know," sobbed Blanche.

"What is it? Have you lost anything?" said Harry.

"A bracelet;" said Miss Edna.

Harry dived into the pocket of her dress and drew forth the bracelet. "Like this?" said she.

"*Ah! le voila!*" exclaimed Miss Edna, seizing it.

"Whose is it?" said Harry. "Is it yours? Oh! do, Miss Edna, tell me its history?"

"*Je l'ignore,*" said Miss Edna, shrugging her shoulders. "But Miss Vane, I beg that you will not make this affair of the bracelet public; it is Theresa's, and she would be quite *enragée contre moi* if she knew it had been brought out of our house."

"There were three people," thought Harry, "who knew about it beside me, and I will tell Mr. Kennett and Mr. Brittain."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### NEW PLANS.



HE theatrical *furor* subsided suddenly; most of the performers were afflicted with colds, and prudent mammas declared that they would never again permit their daughters to take part in such entertainments. Mr. Middleton's glory was waning, and old Mr. Francis Soane was slowly dying. Day after day his nephew declared that he ought to go to him, and yet he could not tear himself away. Harry cared very little about it; Mr. Kennett's continued absence from Four-Oaks, and Mr. Brittain's increased reserve troubled her far more. Janet was growing feebler, and Marcia sadder every day, and while she felt so much for them, old Mr. Soane's condition was to her a matter of indifference, though she wondered impatiently why his affectionate nephew did not hasten to him. Certainly he received no encouragement from her to linger.



While she deplored the misery of her two friends, however, Harry knew not how to inform them about the bracelet. She was unwilling to betray Miss Theresa, because she fully believed that so curious a bracelet must have some momentous secret connected with it. In vain she argued that such bracelets might have been common and fashionable in Miss Theresa's youth; it was strange that Miss Theresa should have a bracelet like that worn in the mysterious miniature, and she determined that she would find out about it.

A letter which Mrs. Fanning received about this time wrought a very material change in the plans of the denizens of Fanning House. Mrs. Bloomfield, Mrs. Fanning's sister who lived at Foxley, had been for many years a hopeless consumptive, but no persuasions could ever induce her to try a different climate. She would not run the risk, she said, of dying away from home. It had been Mrs. Fanning's custom to pay her a visit every winter, but lately she had been so much absent from home that she put off her visit for a time. Beside this, there was the unconfessed reason that there were two excellent birds in the bush, and as yet, not one in the hand. The winter had been unusually severe, however, and Mrs. Bloomfield had suffered accordingly. She now wrote, or rather a friend wrote for her, to entreat Mrs. Fanning to come to her without delay. As soon as Mrs. Fanning read it she sent for Harry to come to her room. She was very much perplexed what to do with her niece, but she little imagined that she would follow that eccentric young lady's suggestions.

"Harry, my love, you know how feeble my poor sister Mary has always been, and now they write me word to hasten to her. I reproach myself very much that I have not been to see her this winter, but it was all because of my great interest in you that I delayed so long. Ah! Harry, I am afraid that this New Year has a great loss in store for me." And Mrs. Fanning put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Dear auntie!" said Harry, affectionately pressing her aunt in her arms, "do not mind me; go to her right away."

"It is true," said Mrs. Fanning, wiping her eyes, "I blame Mary herself in a great measure; she would not be guided by me; I could not induce her to go with us to Cuba last winter, and now she is reaping the fruits of her obstinacy. But it cannot be helped, and Harry, the ques-

tion now is, What am I to do with you? Would you be willing to go with me?"

Harry had not thought of that; she certainly did not wish to go. Mrs. Bloomfield was a stranger to her; she could feel no interest in her except on her aunt's account, and she naturally shrank from a death-bed scene.

"Why can I not stay here?"

"By yourself? Impossible, child; you must either go with me or stay at the Poinsetts."

"Oh! Aunt Eleanor, I would rather die!"

"I am sorry for it, Harry; you know I cannot possibly tell how long I may be gone, and I would avoid taking you on such a melancholy trip."

"I can tell you what to do, auntie. Let me stay at Four-Oaks? You know I could be improving there, and Mrs. Porter would take excellent care of me. I will go now and ask her. Would you let me stay there if they said 'yes?'"

"Well, Harry, I do not know. I had not thought of it."

"Oh! please say 'yes,' Aunt Eleanor; I will be so good. You can trust me with Mrs. Porter."

"Well, you can go and see." Why should she not trust Harry with Mrs. Porter, she thought. She had had charge of her for several years. "Send Judy to me, Harry, before you go; I must see about having my trunks packed. And be sure to make my apologies for not coming in person to make the arrangements for your staying there."

Away went Harry! She almost felt ashamed of the delight with which she looked forward to staying at Four-Oaks, when her aunt was called away by so sad a cause. But she sang a gay song as she sped down the North Lane, which was the nearest way to Mr. Fletcher's. She found Marcia, Mrs. Porter and Janet ready to receive her with open arms, and all three answered for Mr. Fletcher's consent.

"But," said Harry, "you know I am to come to you to-morrow."

"The sooner the better," said they.

"And there is no telling how long I may stay?"

"We will not tire of you."

Happy in this cordial welcome Harry started home, this time taking the path over the Terrace. She had not passed the gate very far when she encountered Mr. Middleton.

"I have been waiting for you," said he; "sitting like

Marius among the ruins of Carthage," pointing with his cane to a rock flanked by brambles, where he had been resting.

Harry said she did not understand the allusion.

"Well," he returned, without attempting to explain, "I have been waiting for the dawn."

Harry made no reply, but walked on rapidly.

"Do you know," said Mr. Middleton, "that I leave with your aunt?"

"I supposed so," said Harry.

"But I am coming back."

As she made no reply, he continued, "I told you, you remember, that I did not despair of winning your favor?"

"Do not talk about that, now," said Harry; "I am thinking of other things."

"But I must speak of it; I must know upon what terms I am to return."

"Oh! friendly terms, of course."

"Let us stop right here, and come to a distinct understanding," said Mr. Middleton, fixing his cane in a crevice in the limestone fence.

Harry stopped and looked at him, waiting for him to speak. He had that self-satisfied, confident air which was so odious to her. "I detest him!" she thought; "I am glad he is going; I have a great mind to tell him so."

"I have not concealed from you the object of my visit," he said. "Indeed, I explained to you that day in the carriage" —

"I remember," said Harry; "and I explained to you. I thought we had come to a perfect understanding."

"You are not yet nineteen," said Mr. Middleton, patronizingly.

"I wish you would quit talking about my age," said Harry, not very gently.

But Mr. Middleton was not rebuffed. "You ought to put away childish things," he said; "you must be aware, Harry, that the position I can offer you is a very brilliant one; it would please your uncle and your aunt, and surely I cannot have so far mistaken the affection you bear them in thinking that you would not disappoint them by refusing me?"

"It would not please *me*," said Harry; "so please say no more about it. I am much obliged for the honor you do me — but" —

"You object?" said Mr. Middleton. "What objection can you possibly have?"

"I do not love you," said Harry, promptly.

Mr. Middleton stared. "Harry," said he, "you expected, I suppose, some sentimental speeches; but I look upon this as too serious a matter for sentiment. Sentiment will not purchase the elegancies of life which I am able to offer you. I thought you had a strong vein of common sense in your composition!"

"It is so cold out here," said Harry.

"When I return," said Mr. Middleton, beginning to walk on, "I shall expect to claim your hand; I have your aunt's permission to apply for it."

"Expect no such thing!" exclaimed Harry, indignantly. "I love Aunt Eleanor very much, but nobody but myself shall give my hand away."

"You are a most unaccountable girl; your friend, Miss Sallie Hart, has told me that you are very wilful, but I really had no idea you would carry it this far."

"I do not want to quarrel with you," said Harry, making an effort to speak calmly; "you are going away; but if you persist in talking to me in this way I shall not be able to keep my temper."

"Do you never expect to be married?"

"Not for many a day," returned Harry, with emphasis.

"I am inclined to think, myself," said Mr. Middleton, "that a few years' travel would be an advantage to you; say eighteen months; you would acquire an artistic taste which would be a great advantage to a woman whose position would entitle her to take the lead in society. I would willingly wait to secure you such an advantage."

"Thank you," said Harry, ironically.

"It is a great pity you are not a little taller," continued Mr. Middleton, thinking he was gaining ground; "Miss Sallie Hart's figure is so commanding." They had now reached the corner by St. Botolf's "That building," said he, standing still and looking up at the church, "is a very clumsy affair. It grates against my æsthetic nature to think of being married in such a place."

"Then I would not, if I were you," said Harry.

"Do not you think it an excessively faulty building?" he asked.

"No, I like it; I think it the prettiest and dearest little church in the world."

"Ah! but if you had seen York Minster, or St. Paul's, or St. Peter's."

"I do not want to see them if they are to make this little church look ugly to me. My father and mother, and all my aunts and cousins were married here, and I love the little old church."

"Associated beauty has a very powerful hold upon the mind, I am aware," said Mr. Middleton; "and since you regard St. Botolf's with so much — affection, shall I say? here in its shadow let me offer you this pledge of my attachment." He held in his hand a glittering diamond ring which he attempted to place upon Harry's finger. He had determined to make a sacrifice to sentiment, for it would have been much more agreeable to his æsthetic nature to have offered his pledge by a pleasant fire in a handsome parlor.

"Do not offer it to me, Mr. Middleton," said Harry, shrinking back. "I have declined, you know, I told you."

"Really! Miss Harry Vane, am I to understand that you refuse me?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"Then I think we had better go home," said he.

After what had passed, Harry was, of course, more anxious to avoid his society than ever. She ran into her aunt's room, and after satisfying her that Four-Oaks was the best place for her, that everybody was as delighted to receive her as she was to go, she went up stairs to make her preparations. Mrs. Fanning sent Phebe up to pack her trunks, and Harry turned her attention to arranging a little box containing what she called her treasures. In the midst of this employment, the long-forgotten little red book came to light. "Ah! my poor little book!" exclaimed Harry, "the sight of you makes my heart ache; you are like the coffin of a hope. And I have been so happy that I had quite forgotten you." It needed but to be seen, however, to awaken all the sad fancies it had first given rise to. Once more she turned over the pages, ornamented with odd devices of birds, and fish, and shells, and here and there a curious insect. "Ah!" thought she, "how frivolous I am! I thought when I first opened this book I would use every effort; I felt that it was a sacred duty to find my father's poor, forsaken, early love, and what effort have I made? Ah! me; what effort can I make? for if I show

this book I shall betray my mother's memory. If I had found her, if I could find her, I would do all I could to make amends. Who can tell me anything about her?" The letter which she had not read fell to the floor, and as she stooped to pick it up some sprigs of dead flowers dropped from it. She opened it tenderly to replace the poor, faded mementos of a lost affection, and one little word which she saw therein riveted her attention. She clutched the letter nervously, she strove to be calm as she read, — "*The past is gone; the more completely we put it out of our minds the happier we shall each be; therefore I would rather you destroyed the miniature.*"

"What miniature?" thought Harry. "Is there any possibility of its having been preserved?" Eagerly she examined the book, and thrust her fingers into the little pockets on the inside of the cover, and drew forth a few sprigs of mignonette. She did not hear Phebe's question of "Miss Harry, what is you a pokin' arter?" for as she drew forth the dead flowers she thought she felt something stiff and hard. Again she explored the depth of the pocket, and this time she brought to light several little cards with unfinished drawings, among which she found the rough sketch of Mr. Thorne's mysterious miniature! One look convinced her that it was the same; throwing the book and the letters she knew not where, with a half-suppressed cry, she rushed from the room. Down the stairs she sped like a frightened fawn, and with wild eyes and pallid cheeks she burst into her aunt's room.

Mrs. Fanning had finished her packing and was reading a note from Mr. Middleton. That gentleman, loth to interrupt her important preparations, had resorted to pen, ink, and paper, to relate the unaccountable rebuff he had just received from Miss Harry Vane.

"Aunt Eleanor!" screamed the young lady he was accusing so indignantly in his note, "that miniature Mr. Thorne has is mine; I must have it back!"

"What are you talking about, Harry?" said Mrs. Fanning.

"That miniature, Aunt Eleanor; I told you about it soon after we came back from the Springs. I thought it was his, but it is not his, it is mine; it was my father's miniature."

"What is Mr. Thorne doing with your father's miniature; how came he by it?"

"I do not know; indeed, ma'am, I cannot tell. But it was my father's, and I have the best right to it; I want it, and I must have it again."

"How do you know Mr. Thorne has it? How came he by it?"

"Oh! I do not know; he gave it to me, and I gave it back to him, and now I must get it back again! Oh! Aunt Eleanor, please do all you can to get it for me."

"Harry, you are insane; what in this world are you driving at? What sort of a tale is this you are bungling over about Mr. Thorne and your father's miniature? How could he possibly have a miniature of your father?"

"I do not know how he ever came by it," reiterated Harry.

"Harry, I cannot understand what foolish freak you are up to about this miniature. If it was your father's, why could not you keep it when you had it?"

"I did not know it."

"Not know it! not know it! Harry, do not expect me to comprehend one word of this. Could not you see it, and could not you recognize it?"

"I could not see the face, Aunt Eleanor, how could I recognize it? Do, Aunt Eleanor, get it again for me; write to Mr. Thorne."

"Write to Mr. Thorne! I shall do nothing of the kind. You tell me that Mr. Thorne gave you a miniature of your father, and you do not know it, and you could not see the face! I never heard anything to equal you, Harry, never in my life!"

"Aunt Eleanor, it is true, every word of it," said Harry, bursting into tears. "How could I see the face when she had her hands before it?"

"She! her! Harry, are you going crazy? Do you wish me to believe that your father was a woman? What are you talking about? I verily have a serious notion of taking you on to Mary's with me; you are not fit to be left to any other guidance. I thought you told me you had given up that flirtation with Mr. Thorne?"

"Aunt Eleanor, I have no flirtation with Mr. Thorne; I have nothing to do with him; I only want my miniature," said Harry, sobbing convulsively. "She was my father's first love, and I want to find her out; I want to love her and to comfort her if she is living. You do not know how

I love her, though I never saw her." Harry hid her face in her hands, and gasped out her words with great effort; as she uttered the last sentence her aunt raised her hands and eyes with a despairing look.

"Merciful Heaven!" she said, "what next?" But Harry only cried bitterly. "Harry, I do not know whether to laugh at you or to slap you. I never did see anybody so full of ridiculous romance. Your father's first love, if he ever had any, is by this time a stout old dame with a house full of children, and would not thank you for unearthing the past."

This was a possibility which had never occurred to Harry; she expected to find her heroine in a state of single-blessed constancy, or tenanted a grass-grown and neglected grave in some pretty churchyard. She did not like Mrs. Fanning's suggestion.

"Oh! Aunt Eleanor, that cannot be!"

"I do not expect you to believe it. I have long since found that you are the hardest girl to manage I have ever had anything to do with, and Heaven knows my life has been spent in the service of Mr. Fanning's nieces. You are so full of ridiculous romance about dead and buried love-affairs that you never remember your own important concerns. You have let Mr. Kennett slip through your fingers, and though I warned you that Mr. Middleton was worth securing, you will not take my advice. You will repent when it is too late."

"I never will repent not marrying Mr. Middleton. I hate him!"

"Foolish girl!" said her aunt, "you set up some ideal in your dreams to bow down to and worship, and when a man who is everything that can be desired, of good family, well-educated, accomplished, brilliant, good-looking and wealthy, offers you his hand, because he does not come up to your fanciful hero in all points you will not listen to him. But I wash my hands of you altogether. You little know the labor I have thrown away in trying to keep him from falling into the meshes of that artful Sallie Hart!"

"Dearest auntie!" cried Harry, throwing her arms around her, "do not, do not wash your hands of me! I am a deal of trouble, I know, but I love you dearly. I have no ideal, but I hate Mr. Middleton. Let Sallie Hart have him, she can like him; but do not marry me to that automaton



who speaks, and thinks, and acts by rule. Let me stay with you until somebody comes I love better than I do you."

"Child," said her aunt, pushing back her hair from her flushed face, "you would steal anybody's heart away. I do not wonder that nobody can resist you."

"Then," said Harry, promptly, "you will let me get that miniature back?"

Mrs. Fanning smiled. "Harry, you are so pertinaacious," she said.

"But, auntie, I assure you it really did belong to my father; I ought to have it. I found out all about it from a little red book of papa's up stairs, all filled with writing and drawings."

"But how do you know that it was your father's book?"

"It must have been his; I found it in the closet where all mamma's books are."

"It is quite possible," said Mrs. Fanning, who was thinking of other things. "Your father was an expert draughtsman."

"Then I am going to get the miniature, Aunt Eleanor."

"La! child, what difference can it make now? wait until I come back."

"But I cannot wait; I might fail to get it altogether if I waited."

"Well, well, my dear, I have not time to see about it now. Besides, I can't say that I wish you to renew your acquaintance with Mr. Thorne. It is an incredible thing altogether, Harry; how could Mr. Thorne have a miniature which belonged to your father? It is best left alone."

"I do not think so," said Harry. "I am convinced that it ought to be mine. Aunt Eleanor, I am going to ask Mr. Brittain to get it for me; please do not say no; you know you think him a very discreet person."

"You obstinate child!" said her aunt, smiling, "I hope he will refuse to gratify such a whim; and he will, if he is really discreet."

"I am going to try him, auntie."

Mrs. Fanning said nothing, and Harry took her silence for consent. Her excitement having in a great measure subsided, she went back to her room to put away the book and the letters which she was now cool enough to remember she had left upon the floor. Phebe had picked them up and

laid them on the bed, but Harry could not take it for granted that they were all safe; she examined the book, emptied its pockets, and turned over the letters. Once more she glanced over the one signed "R. B." "R. B.," she repeated to herself, "whom do I know named 'R. B.?' Why, nobody at all! After all, is it not more like a *P.* than a *B.*? Yes; it is! it is! Oh! misery! it stands for *Rachel Porter*, and 'Esthera' was *Agnes Wallace*; poor, crazy, broken-hearted *Agnes*! That is why *Mrs. Porter* would never tell me her history; that is why *Mr. Brittain* hesitated about it! I will ask *Aunt Eleanor* about it!"

Down stairs she went again; but this time she did not burst upon *Mrs. Fanning* in such a startling manner; she entered the parlor quietly, and sat down without speaking for several minutes. At last she said, slowly and deliberately,

"Aunt Eleanor, which do you think is the worse, a man who flirts, or a woman who flirts?"

*Mrs. Fanning* started. "Why, Harry!" she said, "has anybody been flirting with you?"

"No, ma'am," said Harry; "but men do flirt sometimes, and it seems to me that it is very wicked."

"It is wrong, and decidedly impolitic in either case, my dear."

"Like poor *Agnes Wallace*, now, she" —

"Who told you anything about *Agnes Wallace*?" exclaimed *Mrs. Fanning*, excitedly. "What do you know about her?"

"Nothing," said Harry; "I want you to tell me her story."

"Harry, it will do you no good to know! Never ask about it; never ask me, for I will not tell you; never ask any one, for it is better that you should not know."

Harry noticed that her aunt was fearfully pale, that her fingers clasped and unclasped nervously, and that she was evidently struggling to maintain the mastery of herself. She threw herself on her knees before her, and cried imploringly,—

"Oh! Aunt Eleanor, do not keep it from me, tell me all!"

"Get up! get up, Harry; I am ashamed of you!" *Mrs. Fanning* was herself again, for in the mirror opposite she beheld the reflection of *Mr. Middleton's* figure. Harry saw him as she rose, and hated him more than ever. It was

impossible to find an opportunity to speak with her aunt again alone, and she almost thought that she studiously avoided her. She was now convinced that "Esthera" and Agnes Wallace were identical, and she passed a sleepless night. Her aunt's agitation furnished the last link in the chain of evidence, and filled her with terror. Some dreadful mystery was connected with the history of Mrs. Porter's sister, which every one, from a mistaken kindness, conspired to withhold from her knowledge. She even thought that this had something to do with the Poinsett family's aversion, while she argued that it was just like Mrs. Porter, so kind and forgiving, to be so good to her. And the bracelet! that was but another proof, for of course, Agnes Wallace and Miss Theresa Hamilton had been friends. The gray dawn found her still brooding over these mysteries, and, unable to sleep, she arose and dressed in order to accompany her aunt to the depôt. She determined that she would not trouble her aunt again about Agnes Wallace, nor would she distress Mrs. Porter with questions about her, but she would ask Mr. Brittain; she would insist upon being told; and this she would do, let her aunt forbid it a thousand times; for anything would be better than this miserable suspense — this agonizing ignorance.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

### NO.



HE ride to the depôt was an exceedingly uncomfortable one; both Mrs. Fanning and Mr. Middleton appeared to be laboring under some constraint, and Harry was sad and abstracted. Mr. Fanning alone seemed to have his wits about him, and as if to atone for the silence of the others he talked incessantly. But all his jokes about Mr. Dunbar failed to extract anything from Harry but what Mr. Kennett called "the ghost of a smile," from Mr. Middleton a stare of haughty surprise, and from Mrs. Fanning an impatient frown. There was not

much time for making the adieux after they reached the station, for the engine was already puffing and snorting, but Mrs. Fanning yet contrived to overwhelm her niece with caution and advice upon almost every subject except the one which Harry herself most wished to have overlooked. The cars whirled shrieking away, and in the dim light of the early dawn she rode up to Four-Oaks. In her restless frame of mind it did not occur to her that she would arrive at a most unseasonably early hour. She was eager to begin her life in this old house where her father had once spent a portion of his time, where her mother had often gathered fruits and flowers, and from which she firmly resolved she would never depart until she had solved the mystery of Agnes Wallace. It was a presentiment, more than a conviction, that here at Four-Oaks the enigma of the little red book might be revealed to her. She felt as if about to tread in an enchanted region, and the extreme stillness which reigned about the place harmonized so entirely with her feelings that she did not think of the possibility that the family might not yet have risen until old Ben, the driver, —

“ Miss Harry I specs eve’ybody’s sleep.”

“ What shall I do ? ” said she, pausing on the step of the carriage ; “ I do not want to go back to Fanning House.” As she stood hesitating, Michael Strout came round the house from the garden.

“ And shure, Miss Vane,” he exclaimed, “ it’s yerself I was after hearin’ a rumblin’ up ! And niver an eye is open in the house but me own which is out of doors. Shure, and we are makin’ sich a Paradise round here in the garden as would glad yer heart. Shure ye can sing now in a little while, ‘ Will ye come to my bower ? ’ ”

“ Ah ! Mистер Sthrou ! ” said she, leaning her head prettily on one side, “ and it’s yer own immortal shears that thrims up thim hedges so dacent like ? You may go back, Ben,” she added, turning to the driver. “ Tell Andy to bring my trunks some time before dinner ”

“ Will ye be afther seein’ for yerself, Miss Vane ? ” said Michael. “ Jist walk this way.”

Harry followed him through an archway in the hedge, and found herself for the first time in the old and long neglected garden, neglected now no more. The overgrown and shapeless hedges were smoothly trimmed, the rambling

vines were confined to their legitimate limits, the gravel walks were cleared of weeds and rubbish, and the rank growth that choked up the fountain in the centre of the upper terrace was removed. The fallen statue was replaced in its alcove, and the ancient dial once more presented its brazen face to the King of Day in the sunniest of spots, midway down a broad alley. The hedges and arbors alone were green, for it was yet too early for the buds of spring.

Harry was delighted with all she saw, and expressed her pleasure in such unbounded terms that Michael Strout grew quite communicative. He told her what flowers were destined for every border, showed her his hyacinth beds, and explained what alterations and improvements were still to be made.

"All about that conservatory," said he, "them lilac bushes was growing too abundant; we took 'em down, flaunting in their pride as they was, and pretty soon you'll scent the mignonette with the first breath of the spring."

"But the violets," said Harry, "they must be in bloom now."

"Oh! they is plenty, a peepin' round that arbor off yonder in the shade."

There was rustling on the other side of the privet hedge dividing the garden from the grounds in front, which Harry at first attributed to birds; but presently a man's figure was seen through one of the arches, and immediately afterward Mr. Thorne stood in sight. Strange to say, Harry did not once think of the miniature. Surprised to see him there at that early hour, and puzzled by Michael Strout's winks and signals, and signs of uneasiness, she entirely forgot any interest she had in the gentleman.

"Miss Harry," said Michael, evidently anxious to hurry her away, "it's but cold comfort, I'm thinkin', standin' lookin' at a wintry garden. Be plased to walk through the conservatory and ye'll find a fire in the dining-room."

Harry went immediately, but she could not resist the temptation to linger a moment in the conservatory as she heard Mr. Thorne asking for Marcia.

"Whist! Whirra! be aisy now!" said Michael; "shure ye cannot see her, she was up till late yesternight."

"But I must see her now, right away," said Mr. Thorne.

"Whist! whist! come away" —

The voices ceased, and Harry went on her way to the

dining-room, but before she had reached the door she met Mr. Fletcher. For the first time she felt the awkwardness of having come so early; she blushed painfully, but the dreamy master of Four-Oaks was too much wrapped up in his studies to feel any surprise at the sight of a visitor before breakfast. He said "good-morning" to Harry as if he had been in the habit of meeting her at that hour for the last six months, and invited her into his study. Though the most retired of students he was by no means a morose man, and whenever visitors entered his sanctum he was sure to exert himself for their amusement and instruction. Harry never wearied of the gorgeous tropical birds within their glass cases; the bottles of hideous reptiles had now grown familiar to her, while she found new beauties in the pictures on the wall whenever she looked at them.

"I am afraid," she said, as she took the seat Mr. Fletcher offered her, "that I am intruding; it did not occur to me that it was so early."

"No," said Mr. Fletcher, "the handmaid of Plenty is Diligence, and an early riser shall not fail to meet with a due reward."

"And I suppose my reward is the pleasure of being admitted to this study?"

"If you can find wherewithal to while away the time," said Mr. Fletcher, opening a drawer. "Here is something to amuse you until breakfast." And he handed her a collection of shells, which did indeed occupy her until the breakfast bell rang; whereupon Mr. Fletcher, with old-fashioned politeness, opened the door into the dining-room and bade her enter.

Mrs. Porter and Marcia were there, not at all expecting to have Harry to breakfast with them.

"Why, Harry, when did you come?" cried they.

"Oh!" said Harry, gayly, "I have been making Mr. Fletcher a morning call."

"Janet will be so glad that you have come so early," said Mrs. Porter.

"And I am so glad, Harry, because we can study together," said Marcia.

"Oh! indeed I am not going to study to-day," said Harry; "I do not care if Mr. Brittain is coming. I intend to take holiday."

And truly she did take holiday: she completely wore her-

self out exploring the dusty garret and closets of Four-Oaks, and just before Mr. Brittain came she began to unpack her trunks. To her dismay the little red book was not forthcoming; she remembered that she had neglected to put it in her trunk in her anxiety to learn the story of Agnes Wallace, and she determined to go instantly back to Fanning House in search of it. She ran down stairs to ask Marcia to go with her, but when she reached the dining-room she found Mr. Brittain there, and as the lesson was begun she concluded to wait until it should be over. Marcia had selected the "Cotter's Saturday Night" for Mr. Brittain to read, and he had nearly concluded when Mr. Fletcher came in. Heretofore Harry had always enjoyed the readings as the best part of the lesson, but this evening she could not listen with any interest. Mr. Fletcher's entrance was a sore trial, for, as she feared, he began to talk, and it did not seem as if he would soon stop. However, he was very interesting; the "Cotter's Saturday Night" had led him to speak of Scotland, and then of the Orkneys and the Hebrides, and Harry entirely forgot the book she was so anxious to recover.

"Mrs. Porter," said she, "do you remember the travels Fannie May and I planned at school, and how you were to go with us? Heigh ho! what has become of our journey, and what has become of her?"

"She is married; you knew that, did you not?"

"Sally Hart told me something about it, but she could not remember the gentleman's name. I hope it was that Mr. Stanley she used to talk about."

Mr. Brittain laughed.

"Why do you laugh?" said Harry. "I thought from the way Fannie talked they were made for each other. Did she marry him?"

"No," said Mrs. Porter, "she married a Mr. Jones."

"Oh! horror!" cried Harry. "Did she love him?"

They all laughed, even Mr. Fletcher; and Mrs. Porter said,

"I suppose so my dear; he is very wealthy, and he was considered an excellent match."

"An excellent match!" repeated Harry in a tone which showed that it was not an unfamiliar phrase to her ear, "I hate excellent matches! I thought Fannie had more sense and more spirit. Why did she marry him, Mrs. Porter?"

"I suppose she thought she might come to like him in time, and her sister advocated it, for he was rich and Mr. Stanley was poor."

"Then," said Harry, rising to her feet with the vehemence of her feelings, "she ought to have had *me* with her. They *never* could have made me marry a man I did not love, no, not if they tried for years; and give up somebody I did love besides."

"Fannie thought she was doing her duty," said Mrs. Porter.

"No she did not," said Harry; "or else she was benightedly ignorant. Did she not know that she owed herself a duty? I shall do my duty to myself better than that."

Mr. Fletcher took a turn up and down the room, and presently went out. Perhaps Mrs. Porter wished to divert Harry's attention from her duty to herself, for she said,

"You know Fannie's cousin, Gracie Lewis, Harry? She died a few weeks ago from the effects of the fever."

"Is she dead?" said Harry. "Poor, poor little Gracie; how strange it seems to think that she is dead. It might have been I as well. But," she added suddenly, after a pause, "I would rather be Gracie now in my grave, than Fannie."

"And give up all the happiness that wealth and youth could offer?" said Mr. Brittain.

"Yes," said Harry, deliberately, "yes I would." Then, as she remembered the sad contents of the little red book, she continued, "I believe it is happier to die young any way, before the heart has become soured and hardened by the cares of life. I do not care to live to be old."

A tremor passed over Mr. Brittain's frame; he shaded his eyes with his hand, and one of those

"Visions that arise without a sleep,"

suddenly appeared before him. He saw a still and darkened room, where the air was faint with the perfume of flowers strewn over the corpse of a fair young girl — eyes that would never more open — lips that would never more smile — and then a little green mound with a lily at its head. A long, shuddering sigh escaped him, and Harry, looking up thought,



"Poor fellow, he is thinking of some one who is dead." Anxious to dispel the gloomy impression she had made, she said,

"I think it is N. P. Willis who says that 'old men are already angels,' but that depends. Somebody else says that the defects of the character, like the defects of the countenance, increase with years, and if that is true, some of us, both men and women, might be — something different from angels. I know I for one would be — old Harry!"

Mr. Brittain snatched his hand from his face, too much startled to laugh with the others. He did not care about seeing her an angel yet, but the unlooked for termination of her speech completely deprived him of self-possession. There was an expression in her face which he could not bear; it pained him exceedingly to see the evident struggle to be merry over sad thoughts, and in the excess of his sympathy he stretched forth his hand and laid it upon hers.

"There now!" she exclaimed, "Mr. Brittain is shocked, but indeed I cannot stay to listen to a reproof; I must walk over to Fanning House this very evening for a book I have left behind."

"It is very late, Harry," said Mrs. Porter.

"It is not too late," said Mr. Brittain eagerly.

"No, I am sure it is not," said Harry; "come Marcia, get your hat, and we can have such a nice walk."

Marcia blushed and seemed very much embarrassed. She looked at Mrs. Porter and said, hesitatingly,

"I am afraid — I believe I cannot go — I promised to be at home this evening."

Harry thought of Mr. Thorne instantly, but she would not give up the intention of going for the book; and thought also that it would be an excellent opportunity to ask Mr. Brittain to get her the miniature.

"Mr. Brittain," said she, "you will go with me, will you not?"

"Oh Harry!" said Mrs. Porter, "my dear child you should not ask a gentleman to go with you — what will Mr. Brittain think?"

"Oh! but Mr. Brittain is not a gentleman," said Harry. "That is, I mean," she added, laughing, "he is a friend, you know."

"It will give me great pleasure to go," said Mr. Brittain.

"There now, Mrs. Porter, you see," said Harry. "Can not I go with Mr. Brittain?"

Mrs. Porter laughed. "It is very evident," said she, "that you are going to do as you please."

"But you must say 'yes,' because I promised my aunt that I would obey you."

"I can trust you with Mr. Brittain," she said.

"I shall take good care of her," he returned, and they started for Fanning House.

Despite his mother's repeated warnings, despite the bracelet, despite even the perfect ease with which Harry treated him Mr. Brittain could not help feeling happy in her presence. They met Miss Edna and Blanche before they had gone very far from the gate, and the searching look of surprise with which the learned lady regarded them roused all of Harry's antagonism. "Why should she hate me," she thought, "because my father broke Agnes Wallace's heart? Could I help it?" And she said aloud,

"I don't like that Miss Edna, she is not at all lovable. I do not wonder that she is an old maid. I would not be her niece, oh! not for a kingdom!"

"You judge her too harshly," said Mr. Brittain, a little shocked by her vehemence; "she seems to be a very good aunt."

"Oh! you like her," said Harry, "because she is learned."

"No," said he, "I am not praising her learning, I am only reminding you that there is some good about her."

"What?" said Harry impatiently.

"Does she not devote herself to those children?"

"Poor children!" said Harry.

Mr. Brittain laughed, and Harry's evil feelings gained ground. "An old *bas-bleu*!" said she.

The tone, more than the words, pained Mr. Brittain. "Oh! Miss Vane," said he, "do not suffer yourself to speak in that way."

"Why? She likes French, and she calls me many names in that musical tongue: such as *gigue* and *vaurienne*, and *capricieuse*, and *peste*."

Mr. Brittain looked quite shocked.

"Such names do not sound so badly in French, you know," said Harry, coolly. "*Bas-bleu* is quite pretty after *peste*."

"I should not think you would care about returning such compliments," said Mr. Brittain, gravely.

Harry gave a little impatient toss of her pretty head; Mr. Brittain, she thought was not taking her part.

"Surely," said he, "you do not cherish such strong resentment against every one who offends you?"

"There are some I like with my whole heart, and some I hate," said Harry. She evidently thought hatred quite a virtue.

"You are not aware of the strength of your words," said Mr. Brittain.

"Do you want me to love Miss Edna?" said Harry impatiently. "Because I won't do it."

"No," said he, smiling; "but I want to persuade you that hating does you more harm than any one else; I want to persuade you to do justice to Miss Edna's good qualities, not for her sake, but for your own."

"Well," said Harry, after a pause.

"It is praiseworthy in Miss Edna to devote all her energies to what she considers her calling; do you not think so?"

"That depends upon how she succeeds."

"No, Miss Vane, it is quite sufficient that she does her best."

"Well, here we are at Fanning House!" cried Harry, "and I will yield the point. Only you must acknowledge that Miss Edna is one of those who are *antipatica* to me, and I will promise not to hate if I can possibly help it."

She ran up stairs, found her book, and soon returned, with such a peculiar expression upon her face that Mr. Brittain asked if anything were the matter.

"Yes," said she.

"What is it, Miss Vane?" said he in great concern. "Is it anything that I can alleviate?"

"Yes," replied Harry, "and only you. Let us go, and I will tell you about it as we walk."

In extreme perplexity he followed her, but they had nearly reached St. Botolf's before she spoke again. It cost her more of an effort than she had expected to ask him about Agnes Wallace. At last she said,

"Mr. Brittain, I want you to tell me all you know about Mrs. Porter's sister, Agnes."

"What is there in that to distress you?" said Mr. Brittain. "Surely Mrs. Porter could tell you."

"But Mrs. Porter will not, and Aunt Eleanor will not,

and you *must*; I will know," said Harry, stopping by the church-gate.

Mr. Brittain might have been perfectly willing to tell her all he knew, but when he heard that Mrs. Fanning had refused to tell anything of Miss Wallace's history, he thought there must be some good reason why Miss Vane ought not to be made acquainted with it.

"I think, Miss Vane," he said, "that if your aunt" —

"Oh! never mind my aunt," said Harry; "it is not right to keep me in ignorance."

"I would rather you learned it from your aunt or uncle."

"But I am prepared for the worst," said Harry. "I know that she was my father's first love, and that he abandoned her for — my — mother, and I want to know all the particulars."

"Oh! no! Miss Vane, you are very much mistaken" —

"I cannot be mistaken, and it is very mistaken kindness to deceive me," said Harry, almost crying.

"But indeed" —

"Why! good-evening, good folks!" said the clear, ringing voice of Miss Grace Innibee. She and Miss Emily had been to walk, and were returning home at a very brisk pace. "Bless me! what is the matter, Harry? Has the Professor been lecturing you?"

"I have been asking him a question in history," said Harry, very much annoyed at the interruption.

"La! Emily, did you ever see anything like it, how much she looks like her Uncle Charles?"

"Very like indeed," said Miss Emily; "family resemblances are very singular sometimes."

"La! Mr. Brittain, did you ever see anything like it?" said Miss Grace again.

"Tiresome creatures!" thought Harry, "why can they not go away?"

"Your Uncle Charles was a terrible man to break hearts, Harry; I hope you do not resemble him in that respect," said Miss Emily.

"La! yes," said Miss Grace; "besides that Miss Wallace, there was" —

"Miss Wallace?" Who was Miss Wallace?" said Harry, with a warning look at Mr. Brittain.

"Why Harry? Did you never hear the story of that Miss

Wallace who was engaged to your Uncle Charles? I thought all the world knew it."

"Are you sure that you are right?" said Harry. "Are you certain that it was my uncle?"

"Sure as fate, my dear, but you need not eat me up about it."

"No indeed!" said Harry, "but I am very much interested; go on, please, tell me the whole."

"Indeed I cannot, I've no time to spin out a long romance, but Mr. Brittain knows the story better than I. All I know is that they say Miss Wallace died of a broken heart; but that need not trouble you, for she was of an inferior family I believe. Any how, Mrs. Fanning moved heaven and earth to break up the match, and it was well she did, for Mr. Charles did better when he married Miss Milman."

"What Mrs. Fanning?" said Harry.

"La! child, are you losing your wits? Your aunt, Mrs. John Fanning to be sure. Emily, the old blue bears will catch us by the way if we don't hurry up; good-night Mr. Brittain, good-night Harry."

Mr. Brittain expected Harry to make some exhibition of anger, or at least of contempt, but she did not; she stood gazing at the retreating figures of Miss Emily and Miss Grace a moment, and then she turned to him and said,

"Is that true?"

"I never heard that Mrs. Fanning ever had anything to do with breaking it up," said he evasively.

This evasion was convincing proof to Harry that Miss Grace had made a mistake, that it was her father and not her uncle who had been engaged to Agnes Wallace. She could not doubt that Mrs. Fanning had interfered when she remembered the agitation she had shown at the very mention of her name. She sighed heavily and walked on in silence.

"Why should it trouble you so much?" said Mr. Brittain. "I am sorry you should have heard it."

"I cannot help it; it will trouble me!" said Harry, a little petulantly. "I knew it long ago, and I wish to know all about it. I read something in papa's journal. I know that he went to Madeira, and Uncle Charles never did. Mr. Brittain, will you do me a favor—oh! say you will?"

"Certainly, I will!" he said, with a happy thrill. "It would give me great pleasure to do anything for you."

"I thought — I was sure you would consent," said Harry, "because you are so kind. When do you think you shall see Mr. Thorne?"

"He is not here," said Mr. Brittain, in a changed voice.

"Not here?" said Harry, standing still. "Not here? Why, I saw him this very morning!"

"He left by the afternoon train" —

"Oh, dear me! what shall I do?" said Harry. "He has that miniature, and I must have it back. When will he return?"

"I do not know," said Mr. Brittain, very coldly.

"As soon as he does come back will you not ask him for that miniature for me?"

Mr. Brittain was astounded almost beyond the power of speech. "No," he said, after a painful struggle, "no, Miss Vane, I cannot do it. I little thought what you would ask of me. I cannot do it."

"Why?"

"Because, at the risk of appearing officious, I have twice told you that Mr. Thorne's extremely dissipated habits render him an unfit associate for you."

"But that has nothing to do with the miniature, nothing whatever."

"I cannot help thinking that it has."

"That miniature belonged to my father, I found it out from this little book, his journal," said Harry, holding up the book, which in the twilight he could not distinguish from any other volume. "I think I have been pretty good today," continued Harry; "I took your rebukes about Miss Edna right patiently, for me."

"You did indeed," said Mr. Brittain warmly.

"And I think you ought to be obliging and get that miniature for me. It was my father's and I want it, and I mean to have it. Will you get it for me?"

"No, Miss Vane," said Mr. Brittain, thinking of the bracelet, "you must excuse me."

"You most disagreeable, disobliging person!" said Harry, half laughing, half crying; "what is it to you?"

"It is a great deal to me," said Mr. Brittain, about to betray himself in his jealousy.

Harry was startled by his tone and manner, but she did not dream of attributing this outburst to any feeling for herself. She scanned him closely for a moment, then bursting into a laugh, she said,

"Do not you be uneasy, Marcia has nothing to do with this, — and," she added, checking her mirth, "the bracelet was not hers, indeed, indeed it was not."

Mr. Brittain was about to speak, but she interrupted him,

"Do not ask me whose it was, for I cannot tell you." She ran into the house as she said this without bidding him good-night.

"And so she has not seen that I care for her!" said Mr. Brittain to himself. "But hereafter she shall surely know that it is a great deal to me that she should choose to throw herself away upon such a scapegrace."

Yet the recollection of the miniature and the bracelet rankled in his heart for many a day.

When next he came to Four-Oaks Harry was not to be seen, she had a headache. Another time she was obliged to go to Fanning House; she was tired, or she was busy; an excuse never failed her. But at the end of a fortnight she recovered her spirits, and came forth as pleasant and gay as ever.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### JANET'S PARTY.



THE three giant oaks at the corner of the old brick house had begun to hang their tassels out; a faint green tint was just discernible on the woods; faint odors of the early spring floated on the breeze, and the songs of birds were heard once more. Now did the garden repay Michael Strout for his labor, and Harry and Marcia found the quaint old arbors pleasanter than any room in the house.

Mrs. Fanning still lingered at Foxley, and to all appearance was likely there to linger for weeks to come; but Mr. Middleton, having buried his wealthy uncle, returned

in state to Netherford. He made the Mansion House his head-quarters, and every afternoon his showy coach and four raised a mighty cloud of dust around the square, to the intense admiration of the juvenile rabble who daily stood to watch him as he drove off on his round of visits. He was aware, he said, that his deep mourning would not permit his mingling much in society, but in consideration of the hospitality he had met with in Netherford, he must sacrifice his feelings of propriety for the sake of his kind friends. He paid Harry an early visit, but spent his time principally at Mrs. Dean's, where Miss Sallie Hart, despairing of Mr. Kennett, received him with the most flattering attention.

To Harry's great concern, Mr. Kennett still absented himself from Four-Oaks, nor was he often seen in town. "I dare say he knows what is best for himself," thought she, "but I wish I could see him to tell him that bracelet did not belong to Marcia; it does not seem fair that Mr. Brittain should know it and he be kept in ignorance."

His absence was a source of quite as much concern to Janet, who had become very fond of him. She laid a scheme at last to bring him back; a scheme with which Harry was delighted, but which made Marcia very nervous. She wished, she said, to have a party, a tea-party in the garden on her birth-day, and of course her wish was gratified. The guests she proposed inviting were very few; Mr. Brittain and Kennett, her father and Mrs. Porter, and Miss Dalrymple with her accordion. Mr. Brittain of course received his invitation at the house, and Harry ordered the carriage from Fanning House, and undertook to convey the invitation to Miss Dalrymple. She went alone, as Marcia was assisting Mrs. Porter, and found Miss Dalrymple as obliging as ever, for she readily promised to come and bring her accordion. Harry had intended to have sent a boy out to Tanglewood with an invitation for Mr. Kennett, but she was saved that trouble by an unexpected meeting.

"Stop! stop! Ben," she cried to the driver; "open the door, I must speak with Mr. Kennett. Oh! Mr. Kennett, do you know that you are invited to a tea-party at Four-Oaks?"

"No," said Mr. Kennett, looking very much pleased. "Am I really? When is it to be?"

"To morrow at five. It is Janet's birth-day, and the tea-party is to be in the garden."



"A *fête champêtre*, as Miss Edna would say. Have you invited her?"

"No, you know very well I would die first."

"I believe you — a pedantic old Corinna."

"Hush!" said Harry, "you must not speak of her in that way, it is not kind."

"Why?" said Mr. Kennett, opening his eyes, "I thought I could not possibly render myself more agreeable to you than by abusing her ladyship?"

"I know," returned Harry, "but Mr. Brittain has convinced me that it is wrong to cherish such feelings."

"Are you going to let Sylvo crush all the spice out of your composition?" said Mr. Kennett, laughing.

"I do not know what you mean by 'crushing the spice out of my composition,'" said Harry warmly; "but he is a good man, a very good man; he is indeed Mr. Kennett, you need not laugh; he tries to make me do right, and you always encourage me to do wrong."

"I am very much obliged Miss Harry," said Mr. Kennett with mock gravity, "for this compliment to my friend, I have no doubt his two ears are burning" —

"Nonsense!" said Harry, blushing, "will you come to the party?"

"I will be sure to come. But see here, Miss Harry," he added, leaning into the carriage, "how about that bracelet; did you ever find the owner?"

"Oh! yes! I intended to tell you. You would be perfectly surprised to know who claimed it — but I forgot, I promised not to tell."

"But indeed you must tell me; I am devoured with curiosity, and you say you intended to tell me?"

"But I meant I intended to tell you that it was not Marcia's."

"I am glad to hear it," said Mr. Kennett. "Was it yours?"

"No! the owner claimed it that very night; but you must not ask me whose it was for I promised not to tell."

"Was it Mr. Thorne's?"

"No."

"Confound that Mr. Thorne! Who is he, anyhow?"

"I will tell you who I take him to be," said Harry; "I think he is a relation of Mrs. Porter's."

"Oh! Miss Harry!" said Mr. Kennett, in a voice of great concern, "how can you think so?"

"But I do think so," persisted Harry, "because of that miniature — it was Agnes Wallace, that is I mean it was taken for her, and she was Mrs. Porter's sister."

"It is incredible!" said Mr. Kennett. "Do you think that Mrs. Porter would encourage Mr. Thorne to visit her pupil? Oh! no, no, Miss Harry, you must be mistaken."

"But," said Harry, "it is natural that we should stand by our kindred?"

"But that would be betraying a trust."

"Mrs. Porter would never betray a trust, never I am sure," said Harry.

"Therefore your hypothesis in regard to Mr. Thorne falls to the ground?"

"I confess," said Harry, "it is a puzzle to me. I think some day I will ask Mrs. Porter about it."

"I wish you would," said Mr. Kennett, closing the carriage door.

"Do not forget Janet's party to-morrow afternoon at five o'clock precisely," said Harry, and they parted, she to return to Four-Oaks, and he to relate to his friend the conversation that had just passed.

Mr. Brittain was sitting at his table, book in hand, but quite unable to fix his attention, when his friend, springing up the stair, two steps at a time, threw open the door, shouting,

"Up! up! my friend, and quit your books,  
Or surely you'll grow double;  
Up! up! my friend, and clear your looks;  
Why all this toll and trouble?"

Sylvo are you invited to the tea-party, *the* tea party to-morrow afternoon? I am, and I am going."

"Ralph, one would think you were a boy," said his friend picking up the books Mr. Kennett had dashed down.

"And one would really take you for Methuselah. I have just had one of your lectures second-hand, pray do not treat me to another."

"I do not understand?"

"And do you think I am going to turn tale-bearer to repeat all Miss Harry Vane said about you this evening? How she held you up to me as a model because you took her to task for giving Miss Edna her deserts?"

"Ralph I do not think you ought to encourage her to laugh at people."

"She told me that as plainly herself, not an hour ago, and if you do not hush I will not tell you what I came to tell you."

"What?"

"Are you going to that unique entertainment to-morrow afternoon?"

"I suppose I ought to go?"

"Oh! of course, one must do one's duty, if Miss Vane, tiresome Miss Vane, is to be there."

"I will tell you," said Mr. Brittain with evident effort, "it would give me great pleasure to go, but — that bracelet makes me doubt."

"Doubt what? The bracelet did not belong to her, she told me so distinctly and positively this afternoon."

"Whose was it then?"

"She would not tell me; but that is nothing, either to you or to me, since it belonged neither to herself nor to Marcia, nor even to Mr. Thorne. And by the bye, the most curious thing, she thinks Mr. Thorne a relative of Mrs. Porter."

"Oh! no," said Mr. Brittain, "I know all Mrs. Porter's family: that is not so."

"I thought it a fanciful notion, for it was all founded on his possession of that miniature."

"Surely," said Mr. Brittain, "very much annoyed," she did not talk to you about that?"

"And why not?" said Mr. Kennett laughing, "Does not my lady-love talk to you about a variety of subjects?"

"And she asked you to get it from that Thorne for her?"

"Sylvo you are a gone case!" said Mr. Kennett, shouting with laughter. "What the mischief, man, put such a notion in your head? I shall have to order a straight jacket, you madman. What in the world made you think of such a thing?"

Mr. Brittain looked very much confused. "It was very silly, I confess," said he, "but it is distressing to see any one so young ready to throw herself away," —

"Now you are talking incomprehensible nonsense, and making bad worse — that is not the distressing aspect of the case, and you know it. Go back to your books, you wretched bungler, for I must be off; but do not forget the tea-party to-morrow afternoon at five o'clock precisely — those were Miss Harry Vane's parting words to me."

The garden at Four-Oaks consisted of three broad terraces connected by flights of steps. The arbor wherein Janet had chosen to receive her guests was on the second terrace, close by the steps which led to the upper terrace around the house. Thither she had caused herself to be carried early in the afternoon, where, seated in her invalid chair she watched Marcia and Harry, the one in blue the other in pink, arrange the quaint old china upon the table. Merri-ly they chatted and laughed, while Harry fastened a lily in Marcia's hair, and Marcia pinned a bunch of violets in Harry's brooch. Michael Strout was working among the borders, hid from view by the clustering roses and lilacs, but the scraping of his hoe could be distinctly heard, and the not very agreeable odor of his pipe mingled with the breath of the flowers. Michael however had an eye for the marvels of nature; the scraping of his hoe presently ceased, and parting the thick shrubbery he strode across his flower-beds to the entrance of the arbor.

"Will ye jist behould, young ladies," said he, displaying a large bug held between his finger and thumb, "a rare cur'osity! See his wings; green lined with red, like a lady's mantle. Shure, an if the mather was here he could tell its long, hard name, now, aisy. But perhaps ye could be telling it yourself young ladies?"

"Let me see?" said Harry, advancing gravely, and pretending to examine the bug very closely. "That is the *grambillothomes roscipillicum*," taxing her invention for the hardest possible name.

Marcia laughed, and Mr. Kennett and Mr. Brittain, who had entered the garden a few moments before, and now stood on the steps leading down to the arbor, laughed too at Harry's affectation of scientific nomenclature. Harry heard them, and shrank behind Janet's chair quite abashed, while Michael Strout, whose ears still tingled with the magnificent name bestowed upon his discovery, eyed the insect admiringly, saying,

"Who would have thought sich a little thing could come by so big a name. Ye need not be bashful, Miss Harry, education is a fine thing."

Holding his treasure fast he walked off to the house, while Mr. Brittain and Mr. Kennett entered the arbor still laughing.

"Miss Harry!" said Mr. Kennett, "your talent for

calling names is remarkable; has Mr. Brittain been cultivating it?"

"How do you do, Mr. Kennett?" piped Janet, in her little shrill voice. "Why have you stayed away so long?"

"Miss Janet," said he gravely, "I have been seeking the waters of Lethe."

"What for?" said Janet.

"For my health."

"Well, did they cure you?"

"No," he replied, "the spring was dry."

"Well, but you are not sick this evening?"

"I never was more in a humor for enjoying myself," said he. "This puts me in mind of a picnic we had last spring; would you like to hear about it?"

Nothing could have pleased Janet better, and while Harry and Marcia entertained Mr. Brittain, she listened with delighted attention, to Mr. Kennett's animated account of Harry's picnic.

Presently came Miss Dalrymple, escorted by Mr. Fletcher and Mrs. Porter, and Janet begged that the party might begin immediately, that is, that they should partake of the cakes and ice-cream.

"But Janet, we must do things in style," said Harry. "Let Miss Dalrymple rest a little first, and then while the *Dapifer* brings in the feast she will play us a march."

"You really are growing quite learned," said Mr. Kennett.

"Grand words for grand occasions," said Harry, sententiously.

"That will be grand," said Janet.

Accordingly as the pyramid of ice-cream was brought, Miss Dalrymple earned her share by performing that miserable old tune, "Bonaparte crossing the Rhine." The march being over, the pyramid was being demolished, when Michael Strout came hurrying to the arbor.

"Misthress Porter!" he said, excitedly, "there is two jautlemen that will not be denied, Mither Sutton, and Mither Innibee. Shure I tould them the ladies was engaged the intire time, but sorra a word would they listen. They bid me give their respects, and they would like to come into the garden."

"Let them come," said Janet, "there is plenty of cake and ice-cream."

"Show them here, Michael," said Mr. Fletcher; and Mr. Sutton and Mr. Paul were ushered into the garden.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Sutton, "this is a captivating state of things; ladies I am charmed to meet you under such exhilarating circumstances. Mr. Fletcher, how do you do; Mrs. Porter, happy to see you Madam; Miss Dalrymple, Mr. Brittain, Mr. Kennett good-evening. Your little sister, I presume Miss Marcia!"

"I am Janet," said the child.

"Miss Janet I am happy to make your acquaintance."

"This is my party," said Janet, "I hope you will enjoy yourselves."

"Let me help you," said Mr. Fletcher offering some ice-cream.

"Thank you sit. Methought I heard sweet music," said Mr. Sutton, munching a biscuit.

"Miss Dalrymple was playing for us," said Harry.

"Ah! — we will have some singing in the course of the evening, I hope?"

"Oh! yes, of course," answered Mrs. Porter.

"Mr. Fletcher," said Mr. Paul, "you have quite resuscitated Four-Oaks, I should not have known the place. How gratifying to see the steps of ruin and decay arrested. Mr. Paul was a poet, and felt bound to keep up his character.

"It is a great pity that you cannot restore that old oak," said Mr. Sutton.

"I do not wish it restored, sir," said Mr. Fletcher sternly.

"Who cut it down?" said Harry.

"I did," replied Mr. Fletcher. His manner seemed to forbid any further remark upon the tree, and Mr. Paul returned to the garden, a suggestive subject, in a poetical point of view.

"I wonder you do not put an inscription over this delightful summer-house, Mr. Fletcher? What could be finer, for example, than this; —

*'Ambulantes in horto, audiebant vocem Die.'*"

"I do not care about copying Dr. Young," said Mr. Fletcher, smiling.

Mr. Paul looked confused; perhaps he had wished his quotation to be received as an original suggestion.

"But do you not think it a beautiful idea to put some expression, some sentiment of the human mind in a spot which receives so much of our care and attention?"

"Why," said Mr. Fletcher, "letters, and words, which are composed of letters, are but symbols to express a thought which other things may express perhaps as well. Why should I inscribe over my arbor, for example,

*'Mio picciol orto  
A me sei vigna, e campo, e selva, e prato,'*

when the care I bestow on this little spot of ground, expresses that very sentiment, and is translated, as it were, into the language of flowers."

Mr. Paul did not understand Mr. Fletcher's quotation, and was unwilling to say so.

"Do you mean to say, then, that you do not approve of inscriptions in gardens?" said he.

"Oh no," said Mr. Fletcher; "but I mean that other things may speak to one in a garden."

"Mr. Fletcher means to say that he 'finds tongues in trees,'" said Mr. Sutton. "Ha! ha! ha!"

It was a random shaft which seemed to have hit a mark "The archer little meant." Mr. Sutton enjoyed his ice-cream in happy ignorance of that fact, but Harry and Mr. Brittain thought of the lost oak when Mr. Fletcher answered, with marked emphasis,

"That is true."

"Miss Vane," said Michael Strout, appearing at the back of the arbor, "Misther Richard Poinsett is askin' for ye in the house."

"Bid him to the feast," said Mr. Fletcher, as Harry was rising.

"He wont come," said Michael.

"Bashful Richard," said Mr. Sutton.

"I admire bashfulness," said Harry, promptly. "Excuse me, please; I will not be long away."

Richard had a letter for her from Mrs. Fanning. It was enclosed in a letter from Mr. Fanning to his father, Richard said.

"Thank you, Richard," said Harry. "It was very kind in you to bring it. Will you not come down to the arbor and take tea with us?"

"No," Richard was too much oppressed by the quality Harry admired.

"Then I will sit here," said she.

But Richard protested that he could not think of keeping her so long from her friends.

"Then I will walk to the gate with you, for I want to ask you to do a favor for me."

"I will do it with pleasure," answered Richard.

"I knew you would; you see Richard I shall consider you as a brother, I am sure I would like to have you for a brother. Mr. Thorne has a miniature which belonged to my father, and I want you to get it for me?"

"Does he refuse to give it up?" cried Richard, valiantly.

"The scoundrel, I will thrash him well."

"No, no; now don't you do anything of the kind. Just ask him for it, tell him I want it, he will give it to you. It is a curious miniature; a lady with her hands before her face."

"I will get it," said Richard, "as soon as he comes back; he is not here now."

Harry thanked him, bade him good-by, and ran back to the garden.

"Well! what an interview you have been having with Master Richard!" said Mr. Paul.

"And we have been having some music, and now we are waiting to hear something from *Lucia*."

"Opera airs in a garden? No, no indeed," said Harry, "I am quite out of breath; Marcia you sing a ballad."

"What shall I sing?"

"Auld Robin Gray," said Miss Dalrymple.

"Oh, no! not that," said Harry.

"Why? do you not like it?" They asked.

"Oh! yes, sing it," she said.

Marcia complied.

"Oh! exquisite, exquisite!" said Mr. Sutton.

"Philomela's strains!" said Mr. Paul.

"Too late! too late! Miss Harry," said Mr. Kennett, as Harry hastily drew the back of her hand across her eyes, "that sparkling tear was a most eloquent tribute to the author of 'Auld Robin Gray?'"

"No such thing!" cried Harry fiercely, "I hate Lady Ann Barnard! What right had she to make two



people so miserable? I like 'Roy's wife' a great deal better," and she began to sing it.

"I really think our two *prime donne* ought to have a bouquet," said Mr. Fletcher, rising and walking toward the green-house.

"Then I shall sing likewise," said Mr. Sutton, "in the hope of a similar reward." And while he was singing with might and main, Mr. Fletcher returned with a generous quantity of flowers. He laid them on the table, from which the remains of the feast had been removed, and taking first one, and then another in his hand, admired them complacently until Mr. Sutton had finished his song.

"Oh! what beauties;" exclaimed Miss Dalrymple.

"Let us tie them up in bouquets," said Janet. "Somebody get some string."

"Will this do?" said Mrs. Porter, holding up a ball of cord.

"Oh! yes," said Mr. Kennett. "Miss Marcia let us take a seat on the steps, it is very pleasant there now."

"Let us all go," said Mr. Sutton; and Harry gathered the flowers into her little white apron, saying,

"We must select the prettiest for Miss Dalrymple."

"Prettiest!" said Mr. Kennett, "do you see anything pretty in these flowers that require to be cherished in a hot-house?"

"There was never an ugly flower," said Mr. Fletcher. "Who can fathom all the wonders of the simplest blossom? And there are some so strange, so wondrous, that we might almost believe them to be transplanted from the land of the Genii. The great water-lily of the river Berbice, the curious nepenthes of India with their urns of sweet and limpid water, and that incomprehensible moving-plant, the *hedy-sarum gyrans*, with its revolving leaves, will forever excite the admiration of man until time shall be no more."

"Those are merely wonderful, though," said Harry, "they are not lovable."

"Ay! I thought it was coming," said Mr. Kennett. "Now you will hear her praise the old-fashioned blossoms that grew in her grandmother's garden."

"Well!" said Harry, "and who would not praise the dear old flowers that looked so pretty and smelled so sweet to our happy childhood?"

"She is right," said Mr. Fletcher; "the associations we

have with flowers make them as dear to our hearts as they are lovely to our eyes. Who ever read the romance of the fuschia with indifference? The fable of the narcissus has lived for ages, a warning to vanity, and scarce a flower blossoms in our land but has found a poet to sing in its praise."

"The flowers I love," said Harry, "are those with easy names that grow out of doors. Now, how am I to tell what this foreign thing is?" holding up a beautiful scarlet blossom.

"Oh! you cannot possibly be at a loss for a name?" said Mr. Kennett.

"Hush!" said she, throwing a handful of leaves at him, while Marcia and Mr. Brittain laughed.

"That is not a foreign plant," said Mr. Fletcher, "it is the *hibiscus coccineus*, a native of Georgia."

"Ah! who would have known that from such a name?" said Harry.

"Botanical nomenclature is very useful," said Mr. Fletcher, "defective as it is, in many respects; but I confess, myself, to an attachment for the familiar names of plants; the 'Jacks-in-the-pulpit' and 'Moses-in-the-bulrushes,' and, 'Queen Margarets.'"

"Yes," said Harry; "and think of sweet-williams, and bachelor's buttons, and heart's-ease and morning-glory; the very name of morning-glory is a poem."

"That is true, Miss Harry," said Mr. Paul.

"But those flowers have no perfume," said Mr. Brittain.

"There are plenty of sweet flowers with sweet names though," said Harry, "such as rose, and violet, and honey-suckle and jasmine and lily" —

"And tuberose," said Marcia; "though that is not a particularly pretty name; it is my favorite of all the flowers."

"Its emblem is 'a sweet voice,'" said Mr. Sutton with a bow.

"A pink for me!" said Harry. "Oh! never do I smell them but I seem to be no more than so high; and if I close my eyes, but for a moment, I seem to see again my grandmother's garden with such bunches of pinks where the butterflies rested by twos and threes, and spotted tiger-lilies, and plentiful hollyhocks, in whose deep cups I used to imprison the bees."

“ Mine eyes make pictures when they're shut, ” quoted Mr. Paul in a murmurous voice.

“ There is a strange power in the association of odors, ” said Mr. Fletcher. “ I never inhale the delicate breath of the *resada odorata*, the mignonette, without going back to the grape-covered hill-sides of Madeira. ”

“ Why? ” said Harry, “ Does it grow among the vineyards there? ”

“ No, but the bloom of the vines has the same perfume. If you will go in the woods about the last of May, or the first of June you will easily detect it in our wild vines. ”

“ I have noticed it often, ” said Mr. Brittain.

“ And I, ” said Mr. Kennett. “ Sylvo I believe it was you who first told me of it the day we found that great shoal of water-lilies in the mill-pond over the Ominahaw. The vines were done blooming then, for it was July, but the next year I happened to be fishing there when they were blooming, and I have noticed their peculiar perfume ever since. ”

“ I remember telling you of it, ” said Mr. Brittain; “ that ‘ water-lily day, ’ as we used to call it. That is the flower of flowers for recalling the days of boyhood, the days of boating and fishing and swimming in mill-ponds. Those words of the Poet,

‘ What loved little islands, twice seen in their lakes,  
Can the wild water-lily restore, ’

must go straight home to the heart of any man, who ever, when a boy, dragged that flower from its native waters. If the jasmine by the window is the flower for girls, I am sure the lily in its pond is no less the flower for boys. ”

“ No Sylvo, ” said Mr. Kennett, “ I do not agree with you altogether; there is a flower which belongs to boys at a later period — at least to our boys of the South, — the picayune rose! What a vision does the sight of it call up of a college beau with a posy in his button-hole, going to call on some blue-eyed lassie. ”

In the midst of the laugh raised by this speech, Mr. Sutton exclaimed,

“ By the bye! speaking of college boys, Mr. Brittain did you know that young fellow Thorne is at the head of a dare-devil club? ”

"Yes," said Mr. Brittain, and looked at Harry, but she was so startled by Mr. Fletcher's manner she did not see the look. He had risen impetuously at the mention of Mr. Thorne's name and was walking up and down in front of the arbor in evident agitation. Marcia turned very red, and then very pale, but Mr. Sutton, arranging a bouquet of the flowers that remained, did not observe the sensation he had created.

"Well!" said he, "trust you professors for finding out all that is going."

Harry laughed merrily. "I will venture to say he does not know half," said she, "Mrs. Porter can tell him that since I came here I have told her many a thing which happened in school of which she did not dream."

An angry frown darkened Mr. Brittain's face. "A consummate actress!" he thought. "How totally unembarrassed she is! Heaven help me, I believe she likes that boy for being wild."

While this thought darted through his mind, Mr. Sutton, in reply to Harry's laughing remark, said,

"Take care Mr. Brittain! I warn you that I do believe these two young lady pupils of yours are in league with him, members of that same dare-devil society."

"I do not believe one word you say!" said Janet.

"You need not, dear," said Marcia, rising and standing by her chair.

Mr. Fletcher had walked beyond hearing, but coming back he said abruptly,

"There is a warning to us to go in; the *caprimulgus vociferous* is wailing in the woods."

"What is that?" said Harry, in some alarm.

"The whippoor-will," said Mr. Brittain.

"Dear me! what a name! I thought it was a demon," said she, laughing.

Michael Strout came to wheel Janet's chair up to the porch, and Marcia, laying her hand timidly on Mr. Brittain's arm, said,

"Is that true about Henry Thorne?"

Her voice seemed to plead so for denial that Harry absolutely hated Mr. Brittain for the stern and pitiless rejoinder,

"Yes, it is true."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## GHOSTS.



NOTWITHSTANDING the fact that Mr. Kennett had seen Marcia betray great agitation when Mr. Sutton brought his charge against Mr. Thorne, a little flower she had given him at parting brought him again and again to Four-Oaks.

The garden was now the favorite resort, instead of the little sitting-room over the porch. At the extremity of the lowest terrace stood the tomb of Anthony Fletcher, and here Marcia loved to sit in the twilight of the pleasant spring evenings. Many were the debates she held here with Harry, the most obstinate of little rebels, against many received opinions on taste, morals and manners. It was a melancholy spot; even the rejuvenating verdure of the spring could not make it otherwise, for the garden had been more exposed to depredations in this quarter than elsewhere; and the broken and decaying fruit-trees and stunted rose-bushes did not readily repay the pruning and care Michael Strout so assiduously bestowed on them.

The marble slab which covered the tomb was discolored by the weather, but the inscription could be plainly read :

ANTHONY FLETCHER;

Oblit MDCCCXXXIII.

*Memento homo, quod cinis es, et in cinerem reverteris.*

Upon this tomb one evening in May sat Marcia and Harry. The setting sun was hid behind the house, and light rain-clouds were being marshalled by the winds which continually blew the blossoms of the sorb-apple down upon Harry's brown head.

"I do not see how you can like this place so much, Marcia," said she; "it is the ugliest spot in the garden."

"It is so retired," said Marcia.

"But it is so doleful," said Harry. "It is in shade almost all day. And that lugubrious inscription. I do not like Latin on tombstones at all, it makes me think of that horrid pun about dead languages in a graveyard; but if they must have Latin, why could they not put '*Resurgam*'? I want something on my grave to make everybody think of me in paradise; I do not like being a heap of dust and ashes."

"'Thoughts of mortality are good for the soul,' says old Fuller, and therefore it is well to be here," replied Marcia.

"But," said Harry, "a grave need not be such a dismal place."

"It makes no difference where we are buried," said Marcia.

"It makes a great deal of difference to me," said Harry; "I want to be buried in the sunshine."

"What does it matter what becomes of our bodies?" said Marcia. "God can give the soul a tabernacle when all the elements of the body have disappeared. What he has made once he can make again. We are only sparks of ethereal flame, caught and tangled in the vapors of this earthly fen."

"I cannot talk learnedly like you, Marcia," said Harry.

"The thought is not mine," returned Marcia, blushing. "I read it somewhere."

"It is a very pretty thought," said Mr. Kennett, coming suddenly upon them.

Both the girls started. "Where in the world did you come from?" cried Harry. "What a pity we were not talking about you, you eavesdropper!"

"I have not been eavesdropping, indeed," said Mr. Kennett; "I have been seeking you all through the garden. Mr. Brittain is above there; ho! Sylvo!" he cried, raising his voice, "here they are, discussing the immortality of the soul!"

Mr. Brittain came down from the upper terrace. He had a book in his hand, and as he always felt more at ease with Marcia when Mr. Kennett was by than with Harry, he took a seat near her.

"Oh! is it not horrible," said Harry, "the way those two devour books?"

"This is a book, Miss Vane," said he, "that I could not read without yours and Miss Fletcher's assistance; and indeed, not even then, though I might manage to understand it if you read it."

"What sort of book can that be?" said she, her curiosity very much excited. "Do let me see." And slipping from her seat, she ran round the old tomb to where Mr. Brittain sat with the open book in his hand.

"It is a music-book!" cried she, laughing; "Mr. Brittain is going to learn to sing!"

"No," said he, "It is a collection of old Scotch tunes, and I brought it for Miss Fletcher's and your amusement."

"Oh! how kind! how delightful!" cried Harry.

"Come!" said Mr. Kennett, "let us commemorate so kind a deed by selecting each one of us, a favorite."

"Oh! I know Mr. Brittain's favorite," cried Harry. "Ye banks and braes" —

"Thou mind'st me o' the happy days  
When my fause love was true!"

sang Mr. Kennett. "Give us your pencil, Sylvo; I move that each of us write his or her name opposite his or her favorite, with the date. What say you, one and all?"

"I do not think Mr. Kennett is right," thought Harry; "he need not have hinted so plainly at the reason for Mr. Brittain's fondness for Bonnie Doon."

This thought rushed rapidly through her mind, while Mr. Brittain was feeling in his pocket for the gold pencil Harry's Christmas-tree had borne him. As he took it out there fell to the ground a little note in a lady's handwriting. Harry's quick eyes caught sight of it as it fell. Quickly as Mr. Brittain stooped to pick it up she was before him; but she was too honorable, too sympathizing, to look at it, or even to look at him as she gave it into his hands. She did not see that his face was crimson, but she felt his hand tremble as it touched hers.

What was her indignation to hear Mr. Kennett burst into a hearty laugh, and say,

"Sylvo, man! it will never do to be so careless with important papers!"

And when she looked up there was Marcia actually smiling, too. "Cruel, unfeeling creatures!" thought she, and

maintained a grave composure. Just then Michael Strout came down from the terrace above, pipe in mouth, and hatchet in hand. Anxious to divert attention from Mr. Brittain and his unfortunate note, she called out to him,

“Arrah! what are ye after, Mистер Strout?”

“Shure now, Miss Harry, ye nimble-tongue, I’m for mending the gaps in the ould hedge.”

The gap was close by the tomb, where there had once been a gate opening upon the fields. The rotten timbers of this gate still lay upon the ground. Michael had planted here some new shrubs, but they grew so slowly that the pigs and turkeys which had the run of the old field, found their way into the garden. Michael set himself to work to stop the crevices as best he might, with the remains of the gate. Down upon his knees he was poking about among the bushes, when something arrested his attention.

“Miss Harry,” he said at last, “do but behold this craythur!”

“What is it?” said Harry, sincerely obliged to Michael for giving them something else to think about than Mr. Brittain’s note. Mr. Kennett had taken the book and was scribbling all over it, while she had been talking a great deal of bewildering nonsense about gates and hedges and birds’-nests.

“What is it Mистер Strout?”

“Shure it’s the wasp what lives alone. A wonderful augur he must have to make sich a clane, round hole for his dwelling-place. *Wasp*, I calls him, but p’raps now, ye knowed the edicetid name.”

“Come now, Miss Harry, there is a challenge for you;” said Mr. Kennett. “Come, invent, invent.”

“Ah, now!” said Harry, “quit laughing at me.”

“Come, Miss Harry, anyhow, do but study the ways of the Almighty’s craythurs,” urged Michael.

Harry went because she knew not how to refuse. She saw the wasp, but she hardly noticed it, for, peeping from under a large, round, flat stone, she espied a note. Impulsively she said to Michael,

“Give me that paper?”

Michael handed it to her, and, to her astonishment, she found it was directed to herself. She was about to open it, but, recognizing the hand-writing of Mr. Thorne, and remembering to have heard her aunt say that no gentleman



would attempt to correspond clandestinely with a lady, and that no lady ought to receive a note in such a manner, she handed it back to Michael, saying,

“Put it back; I will have nothing to do with it.”

Michael was a shrewd son of Erin; he glanced at the trio on the tomb, and giving Harry a knowing look, he raised the stone, and replaced the note. As he did so, she saw another, which she instantly surmised to be intended for Marcia. Innocent as she felt herself, Michael’s look irritated her, and she felt indignant with Marcia, for she could not but believe that she had often found letters under that stone.

“What is the matter, Miss Harry,” said Mr. Kennett; “did it bite you for calling it names?”

“No,” said Harry, unwittingly hinting at her distrust of Marcia; “but I hate this ghostly old place; I do not see why Marcia likes it so well.”

“Why!” said Mr. Kennett, “I thought you had a great desire to make the acquaintance of a ghost; or have you been frightened out of that fancy by their visits?”

“No,” said Harry; “as long as I have been here I have not actually seen a ghost, but I have heard mysterious noises; do not you remember those footsteps by your door, Marcia?”

“Imagination,” said Marcia.

“No, it was not,” said Harry, positively.

Mr. Kennett and Mr. Brittain laughed.

“You need not laugh,” said Harry; “it was reality. Marcia will not believe me, since the ghosts here are of her kindred, and she is not afraid, but those footsteps make me shiver to think of them. I do not care so much as I did about seeing the wanderers from the Spirit Land.”

“Then let us hasten in-doors,” said Mr. Kennett; “for if, as the Scotch say, ghosts flit at twilight, we may encounter them. And yonder is the moon struggling through the clouds; we shall have a stormy night, listen to the wind among the pines.”

“Listen to that fiddle!” said Marcia; “somebody is very merry.”

“It is old Michael down in the arbor piping on his flute; he is always piping one way or another.”

“Oh! Miss Harry!” cried Mr. Kennett, “what a pun!”

Harry ran on ahead of them and met Mrs. Porter at the door.

"I have been waiting for you to come in," said she; "I have something so beautiful to show you. Janet has received such a lovely present; she is not able to see you to-night, but she insisted upon my bringing it down to show Mr. Brittain this lovely specimen of Miss Emily Innibee's handiwork," and she held up a water-lily of wax. "Mr. Fletcher has been examining it critically, and pronounces it perfect."

Mr. Brittain took it in his hands and admired it with enthusiasm, while Harry thought with a feeling akin to dismay, "Was it Miss Emily whom he loved?"

Mr. Kennett looked on with an amused smile. "Ladies!" said he, when at length Mr. Brittain gave up the lily to him, "I am about to relate a very romantic incident, of which that gentleman was the hero. Mr. Brittain has some truly tender associations with the 'wild water-lily,' as you will all agree he ought to have when you have heard my story. I thought of it the other day when he expressed his preference for this aquatic plant, but that was not the time nor place for such a relation as I am about to make. About eight or ten years ago, upon one of those mountain lakes of Switzerland, a young man just risen from a sick bed, was taking a boat-ride. Now it often happens, that those little lakes, placid as they seem, are subject to sudden and violent storms, the signs of whose advent can only be detected by old Experience. But youth is rash; our invalid scorned the warning of the fisherman of whom he hired his boat, and embarked all alone in a little cockle-shell of a thing.

' The ship was cheer'd, the harbor clear'd,  
Merrily did he drop  
Below the kirk, below the hill,  
Below the lighthouse top!'

Or what amounts to the same thing, he travelled out of sight of the fisherman's settlement, and was drifting peacefully toward a little sheltered bay, when up rose the gusty skaw. The boat was swamped, and the amateur boatman was left to the mercy of the winds and waves. In health he was an expert swimmer, but fever had enfeebled him. Where was he to look for help? In truth he knew not where; but help was near. Under the shade of oaks and sycamores upon the shore, a party of five were picnicking; a very stout gentleman, and a very stout lady, neither of

whom by reason of their superfluity of flesh, could have been guilty of the philanthropic act of rescuing a drowning man. The other three were women; a couple of weazen-faced spinsters, too prudish to speak to a man to whom they had not been introduced, and a very pretty, blue-eyed girl of seventeen, or thereabout. The boat which had brought them hither was moored to the shore, and, quick as thought,

‘ A little skiff shot from the bay,  
A damsel guider of its way.’

More dead than alive, Sylvo climbed into the timely refuge. The ‘Lady of the Lake’ guided the bark safe to land; the maiden aunts screamed and hid behind the rocks as, leaning on her arm, he crept ashore. The fat old gentleman cried, ‘Bless me! my brave girl!’ and the fat old lady poked her smelling-bottle under his nose, while the more sensible young lady poured him out a glass of brandy. And what do you think Sylvo did in return for all this? He went next day to the very same bay and gathered her a basket of water-lilies, and wrote such a note! All about ‘her sisters, the star-like nymphs of the limpid waves.’ Such were his words, if I rightly remember. It had a terrible effect upon him; he has never been exactly like himself since.”

“What was her name?” asked Harry, softly.

“She was an English girl, and her name was Alice Munsey,” said Mr. Kennett.

“And what became of her?”

“Sylvo pretends that he has lost sight of her; I do not know,” said Mr. Kennett, shaking his head.

“You have talked a great deal of nonsense,” said Mr. Brittain; “Miss Vane, the person who” —

“Miss Harry, do not you believe him,” said Mr. Kennett; “this is a subject upon which he cannot speak dispassionately; his feelings always betray him.”

“Of what are you speaking?” said Mr. Fletcher, joining the group; “this lily? is it not a gem?”

“I have taken it for a text,” said Mr. Kennett, “and have been reciting an idyl for these young ladies.”

Mr. Fletcher took up the waxen flower and began discoursing of the *Nympheaceæ*, but not a word did Mr. Brittain hear, for he was listening to Harry, saying to Marcia,

"I wish I had been Alice Munsey."

"Why," said Marcia; "that Mr. Brittain might fall in love with you?"

"No; but to have done a brave deed."

"Mr. Brittain's thoughts are away with the 'Lady of the Lake,' said Mr. Kennett; "we must be going."

"Good night," said Harry, pressing Mr. Brittain's hand most warmly, and giving him a look of heartfelt sympathy. "That is the reason," she thought, "why he wished me to read the 'Lady of the Lake.' I suppose that note was from her." It did not occur to romantic Miss Harry that note-paper could not stand eight or ten years' wear and tear in a vest pocket.

"Ralph!" said Mr. Brittain, as soon as they were out of the house, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself for the fabrication you uttered to-night. You ought not to do so."

"Nonsense!" said his friend, "you are indebted to me for the sweetest smile and the tenderest look that ever you had from that romantic little fairy."

"I do not approve of getting sweet smiles and tender looks by such means, and nothing kept me silent but the dread that something would be said about that unlucky note."

"That note!" cried Mr. Kennett, with a shout of laughter. "It was near being the death of me! How in the world did you come to drop it? I wish she had opened it and read it."

"It was in that book" —

"Marking the place of 'Bonnie Doon,' I will bet my head!" interrupted his friend.

"Well," said Mr. Brittain, a little impatiently, "I forgot it until I entered the garden, and then I slipped it into my pocket while you were looking for them. Do you think she divined what it was?"

"I have no doubt she accounted for it after some romantic fashion," said Mr. Kennett; "but I think it is a crying shame on old Dame Fortune, that it did not fly open as it fluttered to the ground, and reveal her own name to her astonished eyes. When are you going to arrange that affair?"

"You forget," said Mr. Brittain, gravely, "that she is not at home."

"Will you give me a written promise that you will do it as soon as her uncle and aunt come back?"

"I do not want to make a joke of it, Ralph; I have no reason to think that Miss Vane would smile upon my suit."

"You very proper person! Then try and try again, that is the way I do. Do you think she will do you as she did old Dunbar? You ought to have a better opinion of her than that."

"What an ugly night!" said Mr. Brittain.

"Listen to that!" cried his friend. "Sylvo, you are a doomed old bachelor. I think it is a hopeless case, when a man would rather talk about an ugly night than a pretty girl."

The wind was rushing and tearing around the old house of Four-Oaks; the leaden clouds had utterly obscured the moon; but Harry and Marcia, seated at the table where Mr. Fletcher was poring over his books, were unconscious of the storm raging without, until Michael Strout, opening the door which led upon the back gallery, thrust in his head and said,

"Miss Marshy, ye'll be aafter stepping this way if it's plasing to you."

"Shut the door, good Michael, do," said Mr. Fletcher, "you will blow out my lamp."

Marcia rose and went out on the gallery, but before she had closed the door behind her Harry heard Michael say,

"The rain wad be shure to ruint 'em, so I brought 'em up t'ye."

She knew then that he was speaking of the notes under the stone, and she wondered if Marcia would give her the one bearing her name. It was long before Marcia returned, and when she did come she was so restless that her father at last asked her to sit still, and not open the door so often.

"It is such a wild night, papa," said she.

"Well, that is no reason why you should want to be out in it."

"Harry, said she, in a low voice, "I think there is something going on in town."

"What?" said Harry.

"I do not know; but if you will go on the porch you will hear."

"Let us go together, then," said Harry; and they went out into the hall. But before they reached the porch there

came a violent knocking at the front door. Marcia turned deadly pale and clutched at Harry's arm as if she would have fallen, but Harry said boldly,

"I will open the door!"

The door, however, opened from without, and Michael Strout came in followed by two or three men, strangers to Harry and Marcia.

"I'll tell ye," said Michael excitedly, "there is niver the sign of his footsteps around the place."

"Hold your jabber," said one of the men, "and tell your master we must speak with him."

"What is the matter?" Marcia summoned up courage to ask.

"Do not be alarmed, ladies," said the spokesman; "only a little disturbance in town; our business is with Mr. Fletcher."

But neither of the girls would take the hint; Marcia seemed to have a painful interest in the affair, and Harry's curiosity was so intensely excited that it would have taken something much stronger than a hint to make her leave. The wildest conjectures chased each other through her excited mind; she recalled the peculiar manner in which Mr. Fletcher had spoken of the tree, she remembered his extreme reserve about his early life, and she trembled to think what "crimes unwhipped of justice" he was now called upon to divulge. Marcia's extreme paleness confirmed her fears.

"Ah! shure miss," said Michael, laying his hand on Marcia's arm, "don't ye niver take fear; they'll niver go till ye tell them he is not here."

Harry took this hint; her purpose was to hide Mr. Fletcher before the officers of justice could reach the dining-room, but Mr. Fletcher himself frustrated this plan by coming into the hall.

"All is lost!" thought Harry, with a groan, and covered her face with her hands.

Mr. Fletcher was an excitable man, and not at all understanding the unseasonable visit, for it was late, rushed up and down the hall, ordering the doors to be barred, and exclaiming at every breath,

"Sound an alarum! sound an alarum!"

There was something irresistibly ludicrous in his excitement, and the strangers laughed slightly.

"There is no necessity, sir, whatever, to do that," said one; "we simply wish to know if a young man by the name of Thorne is here?"

Marcia sank upon the steps of the stair, and Mr. Fletcher exclaimed angrily,

"He dare not come within my doors! Who says he is here? Why do you seek him?"

"Well, sir, we were told we might find him here. There has been a fray among the college boys, and Mr. Thorne" —

The man's speech was cut short by a succession of quick, sharp screams, which actually made him start, and which indeed startled them all.

"My God!" exclaimed Mr. Fletcher, "this excitement will kill Janet; go to her! go to her! both of you," he said, turning angrily to Harry and Marcia, who instantly went up stairs, leaving Mr. Fletcher to parley alone with the seekers of Mr. Thorne.

Marcia trembled so excessively she could not stand. "You go to Janet," she said to Harry, "I cannot;" and she sat down upon the upper steps and leaned her head on the railing.

"It is more her affair than mine," thought Harry, and she went into Janet's room, leaving Marcia to glean what she could from the conversation going on below.

She found Janet sitting up in bed in a state of uncontrollable excitement, refusing to listen to Mrs. Porter, who tried in vain to soothe her.

"What is the matter?" she asked as soon as Harry came.

"Nothing dear," said Harry, forcing a laugh, "but a ball in college."

"Why do not you and Marcia go to it, then?"

"Only gentlemen are admitted."

"That is very queer! Why did they come here then?"

"They thought some gentlemen were here who ought to attend; now, Janet, I will not tell you any more about it to-night; go to sleep."

Janet was persuaded to lie down and close her eyes, and Harry, from fear of exciting her, refrained from talking to Mrs. Porter. Perhaps Mrs. Porter wished to avoid being questioned, or perhaps she wished to see Marcia and inform herself correctly about the cause of the disturbance, for she

presently stole away and it was some little while before she returned. When she did come back Marcia was with her, and, putting a candle in her hands, Mrs. Porter urged them to go to bed, saying it was very late.

Notwithstanding the excitement she had undergone, Harry was very sleepy, and as soon as her head touched the pillow she slumbered. She could not tell how long she had slept, but she seemed to hear footsteps in her dreams which waked her. She pushed her hair back from her ears and listened intently. Yes; she could not have been dreaming! There were the same stealthy steps she had thought she heard once before, backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, in the covered gallery just outside the door

"Marcia!" she whispered, touching her companion, who occupied the same bed, "don't you hear that?"

"What?" said Marcia.

"There! that walking outside the door."

"It is only Roxanna, I suppose, bringing up water."

"At this time of night, Marcia? Impossible!"

"Then shall I go see?" said Marcia.

"No, no; no, no; not for the world," said Harry, pulling the sheet over her head:

The sound died away; and, frightened as she was, she sank again into a troubled doze. But "ghastly people of the realm of Dream" haunted her pillow. Once more sleep forsook her; she awoke, she knew not wherefore, with one of those sudden presentiments of near calamity which sometimes call one from the deepest slumber. She awoke, to find herself sitting upright in bed, her hands clasping her knees, a cold perspiration bathing her limbs. Marcia was gone; she knew it before she felt for her, but mechanically she put out her hand as if to assure her bodily senses of what her spirit knew already. The door which opened upon the gallery was partly open, and she thought she heard voices speaking. She listened, and soon she distinguished Mr. Thorne's voice growling out something, to which Marcia replied,

"Oh! Henry, you will break my heart."

"Not I, but your father," replied he.

"Oh! Henry! Henry!"

"This sort of thing does no good. I tell you if your



father had been just I should not have abandoned myself to such evil courses."

"Oh! Henry, you know papa was ready at any time to withdraw his prohibition if you would only abjure your ruinous habits."

"Let him do his worst; I defy him! he cannot turn your heart against me. Did you give that note to Harry Vane?"

"No, Henry," returned Marcia, with a touch of indignation in her tone, "you had no right to expect me to give it to her."

"It is no great matter," said the other, with a short laugh. "She made a request of me through Richard Poinsett, which I granted; the note was only to assure her that she was welcome."

"You know you wrote it in the hope that she would answer, and you ought not to have done it."

"There is no time to fool away in such a discussion; it will soon be daylight, and what is to become of me?"

"What shall we do? what shall we do?"

"Pray waste no time; there are plenty who saw me fire the pistol; if he should die it would go hard with me, and he may be dead now, for all I know. Can't you contrive to hide me?"

Harry heard no more, for it would seem that the speakers had walked away. She sank back upon her pillow, saying,

"And this is love! Oh! heavenly Father, if ever I love, let me love as faithfully, but let him be worthy. Marcia knew him to be unworthy. Oh! how can she prefer him to Mr. Kennett? What ought I to do? She never would speak about Mr. Thorne; never! never!"

Day dawned at length, but Marcia did not return. Could it be that she had gone off with Mr. Thorne? Harry's confidence in her was completely shaken before this suspicion entered her mind, and she felt that she could love her no more. Yet, it was an intense relief, when, after she was dressed, Marcia came in, pale and haggard.

"Has Mrs. Porter risen yet?" asked Marcia.

"I do not know," said Harry, coldly.

Marcia sighed heavily, and Harry, unable any longer to control her indignation, stood before her and said,

"Marcia, why did Mr. Thorne come here, last night?"

Marcia started but was silent.

"You do very wrong to see him at all; you are disobeying your father; you are deceiving Mrs. Porter, and oh! you are breaking the heart of a good man who loves you, and who is worth a thousand like Mr. Thorne. Why do you love him, seeing he is so degraded?"

"Harry, you do not understand," said Marcia, something like anger gleaming from her eyes. "How can you presume to judge me, when you do not know all?"

"I know all I want to know," said Harry. "Oh! poor, poor Mr. Kennett!"

Marcia covered her face with her trembling hands a moment, and then left the room. Harry too, went out, and wandered alone about the quaint old garden, where she had spent so many happy hours with her upon whom she had lavished such ardent affection, in whose uprightness and truth she had believed in spite of every accusing appearance.

"But now," she said sadly, "it is all over!" And in the little arbor where they so often had sat together, she wept over the friendship, which, in her passion, she said was "dead forever."

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## CHAPTER XXX.

### BAD NEWS.



EVER did a more silent trio sit down to breakfast than the one assembled around the table that morning at Four-Oaks. Mr. Fletcher was away, and no one knew whither he had gone. Neither Mrs. Porter, Marcia, nor Harry had any appetite for the meal, and it was a relief when Michael Strout came in to inform them that Mr. Kennett was in the parlor.

But only to Harry was it an unalloyed relief; both Mrs.

Porter and Marcia knew that his errand could be no pleasant one. They went to the parlor, Marcia dragging herself wearily along, and sinking into the first chair she came to. One glance at Mr. Kennett's face sufficed to show Harry that he was not ignorant of the affair of Mr. Thorne. She was seized with the very improbable notion that he had come to demand him to be given up to justice, and that sympathy for Marcia, which she had hitherto refused to indulge, now prompted her to go away, rather than by staying to run the risk of being asked questions which for Marcia's sake she would not wish to answer. In her inexperienced eyes Mr. Kennett seemed invested with all the power and authority of judge and jury. At his first words, —

“Mrs. Porter, I am sorry to be the bearer of very sad news” —

Her hand was on the door, and she was ready to take flight, when he said to her,

“Do not go, Miss Harry; sooner or later you must hear it, sad as it is.”

“How blind he is,” thought Harry, as she sat down. “Does he imagine that I care a straw about Mr. Thorne's delinquencies.”

Turning to Mrs. Porter, Mr. Kennett continued, “There was a disturbance among some of the unruly students last night. You may have heard some three or four weeks ago of the expulsion of young Ashwell, and of the indignation of his friends; I think myself it was unfairly done, and the boys threatened revenge, for Ashwell was a popular fellow both with the good and the bad. I do not think, however, that last night they had any intention but to frighten old Professor Jewsbury, who was mainly instrumental in procuring the young man's expulsion. About twenty of the boys went down to the College Laboratory, which is not far from Professor Jewsbury's room; they burst the door open, and as they were all more or less intoxicated they were doing considerable damage. The faculty and some of the citizens heard of it, and hurried down there. Mr. Brittain was the first to enter the Laboratory, and — and” — continued Mr. Kennett, his voice shaking so that he could hardly speak, —

“And — what?” said Harry, walking up to him.

“One of the young men raised his pistol and shot him!” said Mr. Kennett, turning away his head.

"Killed!" screamed Harry, throwing up her hands. "Oh! woe is me! I did it! There is blood upon my soul!"

"Oh! no, Miss Harry, not killed, not killed," said Mr. Kennett, "but" —

"He will not die," said Harry, "oh! do not tell me that he will die."

"He will not die?" said Marcia, in a scarcely audible voice.

"I cannot tell," said Mr. Kennett; "Dr. Innibee gives very little hope."

Marcia covered her face with her hands and Harry said almost fiercely,

"What have they done with the man who shot him?"

"Do they know who shot him?" asked Marcia, uncovering her face.

"Yes," said Mr. Kennett.

"There were many there," said Marcia eagerly; "they cannot be certain who did it."

"There can be no mistake about it," said Mr. Kennett; "I myself saw the young man fire the pistol, and several others saw it. Some of the students wore masks, but this young man had none."

"But he was not sober?" said Marcia.

"Alas! Miss Marcia, that cannot excuse his guilt?"

"Oh! what will he do!" cried Marcia, in an agony of distress.

Mr. Kennett rose abruptly and walked up and down the room.

"Oh! what will his poor mother do! poor, poor Mrs. Brittain!" cried Harry, wringing her hands. "And what will I do? It is all my fault; I might have known he would do it; he threatened it long ago, the base, cowardly murderer."

"Oh! no, no, no, not that, Harry, not that! Mr. Brittain is not killed, he will not die," said Marcia.

"Harry, dear child," said Mrs. Porter, "do not be so violent; the poor, unfortunate young man is greatly to be pitied."

"Pity him?" said Harry, "I will not pity him! I tell you he has cherished this intention for months. I am to be pitied, it is my fault, all my fault, oh! wicked, unthinking girl that I was! But my punishment is more than I can

bear, it will break my heart. Mr. Kennett, I must go to see him, I must see him; will you not take me there?"

"Impossible! Miss Harry," said Mr. Kennett, taking her hands, "the least agitation would be fatal to him."

"But I will not agitate him, indeed. How could I possibly agitate him? I will only — oh! but I must see him or his mother — if he should die before I could tell him how sorry I am for my folly about that miniature I should never get over it. I will go there."

"I will go with you, Miss Harry," said Mr. Kennett, "but I tell you beforehand, I do not think you will be permitted to see Sylvio."

"Harry," said Mrs. Porter, "I doubt about the propriety of your going; be persuaded, my dear, to give it up."

"No no," said Harry, "it is useless to talk to me, I must go, I will go."

"I will get your hat and veil, Harry," said Marcia, glad of an excuse to get away. Mrs. Porter left the room with her, and Harry looking up in Mr. Kennett's face saw that his eyes were full of tears.

"O! I am so sorry for you!" said she, her own tears beginning to flow. Mr. Kennett turned away, and presently Mrs. Porter came in with her hat.

The rain was still falling slowly, but Harry did not mind it, indeed it is doubtful if she even knew it rained. What she would say or do, she hardly knew, but the recollection of Mr. Thorne's threats at Myrtle Springs was to her an accusing angel.

"Why did I ever have anything to do with Mr. Thorne?" she thought. "I encouraged him only because it seemed to me a fine thing to have somebody dying and sighing for me, and to boast of it at school. And now I am fitly punished! But it is so hard that Mr. Brittain, good, kind Mr. Brittain, must suffer for my folly. He has been so good to me! He never flattered me, he always told me when I did wrong, like an honest friend. And how often I have been rude and resentful when he told me of my faults. Because I was afraid to face them. But I am sure after this bitter lesson I will face them bravely and conquer them."

She had but just made this good resolution when they entered Mrs. Brittain's house. The servants were hanging about the passage and stairway in that anxious, demoralized condition which sudden calamity always produces.

Dr. Innibee was standing in the hall, talking with Mr. Fletcher, who also looked exceedingly anxious and demoralized. The grave aspect of physician, visitor, and servants filled Harry with terror. .

"Oh, Dr. Innibee!" she cried, "tell me how he is."

Dr. Innibee stared. Miss Vane was evidently a most unexpected apparition. Mr. Kennett felt, what Harry was at that moment incapable of feeling, that she was in an awkward position, but he had no explanation to offer.

"It is gratifying to see you here, Miss Vane," said Mr. Fletcher; "Mr. Brittain is a worthy man, and a most faithful preceptor; I am glad to see you testify to his worth."

Dr. Innibee said nothing, but he thought that if her aunt had been at home Miss Harry Vane would not have been permitted to testify to Mr. Brittain's worth in such a manner.

"Is he better? Will he die?" pleaded Harry, trembling at the Doctor's silence.

Doctors never like to commit themselves to any opinion.

"Well, well, we shall see," he said oracularly.

"Can I see him?" said Harry.

"Not on any account," said the Doctor; "he must be kept perfectly quiet."

"Oh! dear! what shall I do?" cried Harry; "can I not see Mrs. Brittain?"

"Mrs. Brittain is lying down, she is completely worn out."

"Ah! but do let me see her, it can do her no harm to see me."

"She is the most pertinacious thing to be sure!" thought the Doctor. "Charlotte, is your mistress asleep?"

"No, sir."

"Go ask if she will see Miss Vane." Adding mentally, "I believe she would have come here in spite of her aunt."

Charlotte soon returned and said she would show Harry to her mistress' room.

Poor Mrs. Brittain lay on her bed completely stunned. The fountain of her tears, which overflowed so readily at the mere imagination of harm to her idol, was dry. She had, as Dr. Innibee said, worn herself out, not with weeping and wailing, as might have been looked for, but with running about the house for everything that had been required since her son was brought home fainting with pain. She lay now on her bed with dry, staring eyes, trying to think what

would become of her if Sylvo were to die. Stunned as she was, she did feel some little surprise when she was told that Miss Vane wished to see her. The animosity with which she regarded the whole tribe of Fannings was held in abeyance by the calamity which threatened her, and when Charlotte, who had been Sylvo's nurse, added that Miss Vane was "oncommon anxious," she had not words wherewith to refuse.

Charlotte had been as quick to see her young master's preference for Harry as was his mother; it was too great an honor to be passed by unnoticed, that the rich and pretty Miss Vane should come to see him when he was shot, and she ushered her into Mrs. Brittain's room with great satisfaction.

If Harry had taken any thought as to what she should say, she certainly forgot it all when she saw the white and rigid face and tearless eyes of Mr. Brittain's mother. She realized in its full force the dreadful affliction which threatened her, and in a paroxysm of grief she threw herself upon the bed, put her arms around Mrs. Brittain's neck, and, with her face pressed to hers, cried and sobbed as if her heart would break.

O! divinest sympathy! that needs no words to make itself understood; whose absence no words can ever conceal! Never was a woman more keenly alive to sympathy than Mrs. Brittain. If Harry had come to her with the customary phrases of condolence she would have despised her, but this outburst of feeling which could express itself only in gasps, and sobs, and tears, went straight to her heart. She found that relief in tears which had hitherto been denied her, and it was with something very like satisfaction that she thought Sylvo was appreciated by such a careless, giddy young girl as Miss Vane. Ever since that November evening when Harry had given Mr. Brittain a seat in the Fanning carriage Mrs. Brittain had vibrated between condemnation and approval of her son's choice; which was a great improvement certainly upon the hitherto unqualified condemnation with which she had regarded Miss Vane. And now Harry's passionate tears had almost washed away the last vestige of the prejudice she had so obstinately cherished. She did not say in her heart that Harry should have her son, for as yet the hope of his recovery was very faint; but she did say that if Sylvo died she would love and cher-

ish Harry for his sake : a resolution in which she was perfectly sincere at the time.

“The devil was sick, the devil a saint would be,  
The devil got well, the devil a saint was he,”

is a proverb we see exemplified every day ; and when after her son's recovery Mrs. Brittain still indulged, though in a modified degree, in forebodings and misgivings concerning the lively Miss Vane, she appeased her conscience with the thought that she unquestionably would have loved her and cherished her if Sylvo had died ! To cherish her for Sylvo living was something that it seemed a little harder to do.

“Oh ! Mrs. Brittain !” said Harry, when at length her tears would let her speak, “he will not die ! God is good, He will let him live. I never saw a better man than Mr. Brittain. And oh ! I am so much to blame for this, oh ! so much more than he thinks. I want you to tell him that I am so sorry I ever was obstinate and wilful, and I know he was always right.”

Mrs. Brittain did not understand a word of this, and when the message was delivered to her son a few days after, he did not understand it himself ; but he hoped in vain for Harry to come and explain it, she came to see him no more.

Mr. Kennett was waiting in the hall when she came out of Mrs. Brittain's room, somewhat relieved by the tears she had shed, though still bitterly upbraiding herself for her silly flirtation with Mr. Thorne. Heartily as she now condemned him, cordially as she now detested him, it was but an added anguish to remember that her manner in dismissing him had been anything but gentle and kind.

“Did you see Mr. Brittain ?” she found courage to ask of Mr. Kennett when they left the house. “And will he die ?”

“I saw him,” said Mr. Kennett, “but he was sleeping.”

“He is so good,” said Harry, “surely he will live.”

“Oh yes, Miss Harry,” said Mr. Kennett, with a sigh, “I hope he will live, I see no reason why we should not hope.”

“What will they do with Mr. Thorne ?”

“They have not found him,” said Mr. Kennett.

“He is a bad young man,” said Harry, “because I believe he shot Mr. Brittain deliberately ; but oh ! if any one



could see my heart, it would show that I am doubly punished. I encouraged Mr. Thorne, and when I got tired of it, he thought I was prejudiced by Mr. Brittain—do not you see how much cause I have to be distressed?”

“I think you blame yourself more than is necessary,” said Mr. Kennett. “Mr. Thorne took deliberate aim at Mr. Brittain, it is true, but I believe he would have done the same to the first man who opposed him, be he who he might.”

At the gate of Four-Oaks they met Richard Poinsett evidently full of some important communication.

“Harry,” he said, “I have been to see you about”—he stopped and looked at Mr. Kennett, who immediately walked on.

“Yes, I know,” said Harry, abruptly; “about that miniature? Did you get it?” The recollection that Mr. Brittain had refused to ask Mr. Thorne for it recurred to her with sudden pain. “Oh! Richard!” she added, “I am so sorry I asked you for it.”

Richard entirely misapprehended the cause of her regret. “Nobody in the world knows anything about it,” said he, anxious to reassure her, “except Aunt Theresa; and that is the strangest part of the story; she came into my room while I was looking at it, and she took it from me and would not give it back; she said that your father had never any right to it.”

“Yes,” said Harry, “it is but natural that she should feel so.” When she remembered the bracelet it did not surprise her at all that Miss Theresa should have claimed the miniature, for she had long ago decided, quite satisfactorily, that Miss Theresa and Agnes Wallace were bosom friends. It was easy now to account for Miss Theresa’s extreme reserve toward her.

“I am very sorry,” said Richard, “but I could not help it.”

“Oh! no,” said Harry, “it was not your fault. I am much obliged for the trouble you have taken to get it; I can see Miss Theresa about it myself.”

Richard went home, and she walked slowly up to the house. By the time she reached the door she had resolved to go that very morning and learn from Miss Theresa the story of the miniature. She ran up stairs to get the little

red book, and was hurrying through the hall when Mrs. Porter stopped her.

"Surely, my dear child, you do not intend going out again?"

"Yes," said Harry, trembling with excitement, "I must; I am going to Miss Theresa."

"But it is nearly dinner-time, and you have eaten no breakfast, and you look like a ghost."

"But Mrs. Porter you do not know; I want to see Miss Theresa very particularly."

"Miss Theresa is with Mr. Brittain," said Mr. Kennett, "and will not be at home to-day."

Since she was attending on Mr. Brittain Harry could endure to wait; she went obediently and laid down on the couch in the little sitting-room up-stairs. She was so exhausted that she soon fell asleep, and it was almost dusk when she awoke. As she lay there feeling too languid to rise she heard some one talking in the passage. It was Nick Bayne, saying to Marcia,

"It's no use, Miss Marcia, it's no use at all. If he ain't got away from here he will betray hisself. Do all I can, drink he will have. This very noon, Jim, the free woman's son smuggled in a jug o' suthin, and he's drunk with it now. I'se done what I could, I'se always had a eye to him for the sake o' the family. Your great-uncle, God rest him, was the best friend as ever I had, and I would do a heap for your own sake, but how am I to get along with a drunken beast in my house full o' children? I begs your pardon Miss, but he's no better nor that, fault o' the liquor. And worsen nor that they'll track him there."

"Poor Marcia," thought Harry, as she left the room, "poor Marcia, how can she love him? I wish she did not love him."

And now Harry's feelings toward her friend began to undergo a reaction; she disapproved as strongly as ever of her love for Mr. Thorne, but she began to respect that constancy which could not be shaken by all his wrong doing. The more she reflected upon her own conduct the more charitably did she judge Marcia, and evening found her as tender and as sympathizing as she had ever been.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

## IN THE CONFESSIONAL.



R. BRITTAIN is better," were the first words Harry heard the next morning. They were spoken by Marcia, to whom the intelligence was as welcome as it was to Harry.

"He will not die!" exclaimed Harry, throwing her arms around her friend. "Oh! Marcia, I hope all will yet be well!"

"I hope so indeed," said Marcia with a sigh.

But Harry was sure of it, and so light of heart was she that she went singing about the house.

Janet was sitting in her chair arranging and rearranging a bouquet with great care.

"What are you going to do with those flowers, Jennie?" said Harry, as she ran into Mrs. Porter's room.

"When people's friends are sick," said Janet, "they generally send them something nice. You and Marcia make a great to-do over Mr. Brittain, but neither of you have sent him a thing. I wish this geranium would stay *fixed*."

"Let me help you," said Harry.

"No, go away, I want to do it all myself."

"But, Janet, you ought to have some string, that geranium will never stay 'fixed' unless you tie it as you go."

"Well, get me some string then, but you shan't make the bouquet."

"Mrs. Porter can give us some string," said Harry, "cannot you?" she asked of that lady who was arranging her bureau drawers.

"And I want some ribbon too, Harry," Janet called out from the other end of the room. "Which would you have, pink or blue?"

"Blue is the prettier," said Harry, "it is the color of the sky."

"Here is some blue," said Mrs. Porter.

"I believe I like pink better," said Janet. "Yes, pink is a great deal prettier. Mrs. Porter, please look for some pink."

"Mrs. Porter had a long search for the pink ribbon, which was not forthcoming, but in turning over the contents of the drawer Harry discovered something which entirely banished Janet, the ribbon, and the bouquet from her mind. It was an old-fashioned locket of glass, containing a ringlet of hair, black as jet.

"Oh! Mrs. Porter, do let me see that curious thing?" cried Harry. "Whose hair is this?"

"My sister Agnes'," said Mrs. Porter.

"Why," said Harry, with a startled look, "I thought her hair was light, light as Marcia's?"

"No," said Mrs. Porter, "she had black hair, and black eyes."

"Then let me go! let me go!" cried Harry, "the hair is enough! Where is my hat? Where is my book?" And before Mrs. Porter could recover from her surprise, Harry was on her way to see Miss Theresa.

The rain had spent itself the day before and the sun was shining brightly, the birds singing gayly as she hurried over the Terrace. Her long search was over, her doubts were at an end, and henceforth she would make Miss Theresa's happiness her care through life. In consideration of the fact that Miss Blanche would soon be in society, the home of the Poinsetts was undergoing some improvements. The flower-garden in front presented a more inviting aspect than it did that forlorn, rainy day when Harry first entered it; but the brick walk was the same, and so was the contracted little porch. Never, since the day she left for Myrtle Springs in Mrs. Dean's carriage, had she entered the gate, except on those formal occasions, when attired in her bravest finery she went with her aunt on her rounds of fashionable calls. Now she rang the bell with far other feelings than had ever been hers on coming to that house.

"Miss Theresa, I want to see Miss Theresa," she said to 'Liza, who, magnificently turbaned, came to open the door.

'Liza had imbibed the family prejudice against Miss Vane;

her look might have withered Marcia, but Harry, full of her romantic discovery, did not see it.

"Miss Theresa have been with Professor Brittain all of yesterday, her rest was oneasy last night, and she have been feeling poorly to-day."

"I cannot help it," said Harry, impatiently, "I must see her; I will go up to her room." And she ran up the stair, leaving 'Liza to mutter,

"Sakes alive! what a highty-flighty! Miss Blanche wouldn't never a run pass a 'spectable servant woman that fashion, like a buggler-robber!"

Davy had refused to put his neck in Miss Edna's yoke, and had constituted himself pupil extraordinary to Miss Theresa. He sat in her room by her side, conning his spelling-lesson while she manufactured a thule cape for Blanche. She had just tacked a little pink bow among the myriad of puffs when a startling rap at her door caused her to run her needle into her finger.

"Come in," said Miss Theresa, stanching the blood with her lips, and in came Harry. Not walking or running, or gliding or flying, but as if she were borne along by some unseen power. Her face was pale, her eyes burning; half-frightened at her looks, Miss Theresa did not observe the little red book in her hand. Indeed she had not time to observe anything but her visitor's looks, for before she could speak Harry was on her knees at her side, her head in her lap, utterly oblivious of the delicate finery she was crushing in her abandonment of feeling. One would have thought that Harry had cried enough the day before to have exhausted her tears, but if young ladies can weep at will she had reserved not a few for this occasion.

"Oh! oh! oh! I have found her! I have found her at last!" she sobbed forth.

There were in Netherford, as doubtless there are elsewhere, two kinds of gossips; those who talked, and those who listened. Now Miss Edna was of the latter sort; she did not talk much, but she listened indefatigably, and what she heard she made welcome to her family; and she had heard that morning that the young ladies at Four-Oaks had hid Mr. Thorne away. Therefore Miss Theresa connected Harry's excitement with that gentleman.

"My dear child, I am very sorry for you," said she.

"Oh! but I am so happy!" said Harry, laughing hysterically. "I mean I am so sorry."

"Mr. Brittain is better," said Miss Theresa, "I hope he is out of danger. But Harry, my poor, misguided little girl, let me entreat you to accept this affair as a merciful warning, and give up Mr. Thorne."

"Mr. Thorne!" said Harry, "do you think I care for him? I never did; and now that he has shot Mr. Brittain, good, kind Mr. Brittain, I do not care what becomes of him. It is you I love, it is you I have been seeking these long, long months. I loved you all the while, though I did not know it was you." And she kissed Miss Theresa's hands with a vehemence which made her blush.

Gentle Miss Theresa, whose feelings had never betrayed her into such an ungovernable outburst, even in the passionate days of youth, began to fear that Harry's mind had received a shock. She began to look about for some means of escape from the maniac, and perhaps as a preliminary step thereto, she disengaged the crushed and shapeless cape from Harry's incumbent head. As she withdrew it the little red book fell to the ground. It was now Miss Theresa's turn to grow pale. She picked up the book, and with a trembling hand turned over the leaves.

"Harry!" she said, "where did you find this? Who gave it to you? Who sent you here?"

Harry raised her head, and seeing the book in Miss Theresa's hands, said,

"That told me all about it. Oh! Miss Theresa I love you for his sake, do not be so cold and distant to me. To think I lived in the same house with you so long and did not know that my dear father loved you. Oh! you must love me, you must let me love you, for if I am her child I am his child too, and they are both dead now, and I will be your child the rest of my life, if you will forgive the wrong my mother did you."

"My dear child, you are laboring under some strange mistake; your mother never did me a wrong in her life, why should you think so?"

"Ah! Miss Theresa, why should you refuse to acknowledge it? I have read the sad records of that little book, but I have told no one about it; your secret will be safe with me. But it has grieved me so to think about that book, and all the ease I can find now is in loving you; do not refuse the only restitution I can make. I want to love you for the sake of what you have suffered, and — and — to make you think less hardly of my mother," said she, bursting into tears.

"Love me as much as you will, Harry," said Miss Theresa, "but for my own sake. I never loved your father, nor he me, I can have no claim upon your affection on that account."

"Was not that book my father's?"

"No; who told you so?"

"No one; but I found it among my mother's things, — in a closet at Fanning house, — last September," said Harry, relating every corroborating circumstance as she saw Miss Theresa growing more and more incredulous and perplexed.

"And that miniature, Miss Theresa, how did Mr. Thorne come by it?"

"I can faintly guess," said Miss Theresa, "but it was not *his* father's Harry," she added with a faint smile. Whatever was the history of Miss Theresa's heart she evidently was not willing to tell it, and Harry could not feel altogether satisfied that the contents of the little red book did not refer to an early attachment between Miss Theresa and her father, but she was too delicate to press the question. She stood embarrassed for a few moments, and then said,

"Miss Theresa I would never have read that book, but I thought I had the right to do so."

"I fully believe you, Harry."

"And there are two letters there, one is signed 'R. P.' or 'R. B.,' that one I read, but the other I did not read."

"Miss Theresa started, opened the book nervously and closed it again.

"But only tell me one thing and I will ask no more," said Harry; "are you happy?"

"Perfectly happy, dear child."

Harry sighed. Perhaps it would have been more agreeable to her to hear that Miss Theresa cherished a secret sorrow.

"Aunt Tessa!" cried Davy, pushing by Harry, spelling-book in hand, "I've been studyin' an' studyin'; I wish you would hear my lesson; I'm tired a waitin'."

"I must go," said Harry, taking up her hat. "Good-by Davy, good-by Miss Theresa," and she kissed her, full of the persuasion that she was kissing her father's first love.

Who can tell what a day may bring forth?" Little did

Harry dream when she went to see Miss Theresa that her aunt would be waiting for her at the gate as she came out; but so it was. The story of Mr. Thorne and Mr. Brittain had been whispered to Mrs. Fanning on the cars, together with the report that the young ladies at Four-Oaks had connived at Mr. Thorne's escape. Mr. Fanning stopped, on the way down, at his plantation, but after such a report it was not to be expected that his wife would stop anywhere until she should have safely established her troublesome niece once more under her watchful eye. Accordingly she went directly from the depot to Four-Oaks, and hearing that Miss Vane had gone to visit Miss Theresa she stopped at the Poinsett's gate just as Harry was coming out.

Harry's joy at sight of her was unfeigned, but it was somewhat tempered by awe as she glanced at the deep mourning dress which her aunt wore. Mrs. Fanning was not an unfeeling person; she was as sorry for her sister's death as it was possible to be, seeing there had never been much congeniality between them. She shed a few tears at sight of her niece, whereat Harry's flowed also, and thus her flushed face escaped remark. But Mrs. Fanning was too full of vexation at the reports she had heard long to indulge her grief.

"Well, my child, I am glad to have you again with me," said she. "But what is this dreadful news about Mr. Brittain?"

Harry related the circumstances.

"And what is this story about your having hid Mr. Thorne?"

"I hid Mr. Thorne? Indeed I did nothing of the kind. I have not seen him, and I no more know where he is than you do ma'am. I am surprised that any one should assert such a thing."

"I am not at all surprised," said Mrs. Fanning. "Mr. Dunbar told me that the manner in which you and Miss Fletcher received those who went to look for Mr. Thorne was very suspicious."

"Mr. Dunbar!" said Harry, "how should he know anything about it, he was not there; you would never find him where there might be danger."

"One of the men who were there was his particular friend. Since you deny it, of course, my dear, I do not believe it; but there can be no doubt but that you allowed yourself to



be placed in a suspicious light. You should not have been seen by those people, though unfortunately the fact that Miss Fletcher is suspected is quite sufficient to implicate you. It does not at all surprise me that people should talk about it, but it does surprise me exceedingly that Mrs. Porter, a woman who has had charge of young girls so long, should not have kept a more careful watch over Miss Fletcher. I shall never cease to regret having left you there; it was a great mistake."

"Indeed, Aunt Eleanor, Mrs. Porter is one of the most careful, watchful people in the world; she would not neglect her charge."

"You are not qualified to judge, my dear. I do not believe that you had anything to do with hiding Mr. Thorne, but Mr. Dunbar informed me of one extraordinary act of impropriety on your part which he learned from Grace Innibee. Harry I cannot find words to express how shocked I was to hear that you had actually been to Mrs. Brittain's and begged to be allowed to see Mr. Brittain; after that I am sure you are not qualified to pronounce upon Mrs. Porter's fitness to take charge of young ladies. I suppose it was by her consent that you saw so much of Mr. Thorne at school?"

"No," said Harry; "if I had obeyed her all this would not have happened."

"And what has become of that miniature?"

"Miss Theresa has it, it belonged to her."

"I am very glad to know that it is in the hands of so excellent a person as Theresa Hamilton; and so may you be, for with her the matter will end. Had it fallen into the hands of Grace Innibee" —

"Yes! it would have walked all over the country in seven league boots!" said Harry energetically. "A pretty pair of gossips, she and Mr. Dunbar! I wish they would let me alone!" And Harry began to cry.

"You need never expect them to let you alone, you foolish child, as long as you are so indiscreet."

"How could I tell it was improper to go to ask after Mr. Brittain? I did not know," said poor Harry, inexpressibly mortified to learn that she had been guilty of a very indelicate act.

"I do not blame you child, so much as I do those who should have prevented you; and myself more than all, who

should never have left you to the guidance of so weak a person. However, it is past now, and I must be more careful of you in future. Phebe shall go up to Four-Oaks this afternoon to pack your trunks, and hereafter you must only visit there at long intervals, and in company with me."

"But Auntie that will make them feel so hurt?"

"I cannot help that my dear. And now let us change the subject. Have you seen Mr. Middleton?"

"He called on me once," said Harry.

"I have invited him to return to Fanning House," said her aunt, "and I hope, Harry, you will receive him pleasantly."

"Yes, ma'am," said Harry, very meekly.

Phebe went up to Four-Oaks that afternoon, the bearer of an exceedingly polite note from Mrs. Fanning, excusing Harry from returning that day, but promising that she should call very soon. Nevertheless, as Harry had feared, they were hurt. Mr. Fletcher bore it in silence, but Marcia indulged in a hearty cry, and Mrs. Porter took the resolution to go and explain the affair to Mrs. Fanning herself. Her conscience had upbraided her before Mrs. Fanning's note arrived, although she had acted with the best intentions.

When Mrs. Porter arrived at Fanning House she asked only for Mrs. Fanning. Two days had passed since that lady returned, and yet Harry had not been seen at Four-Oaks. By her aunt's desire she stayed in her room when Mrs. Porter called, and Mrs. Fanning went down alone. She had not the slightest doubt but that Mrs. Porter had come to make explanations and apologies, and although incensed at the indifference with which she thought her niece had been treated in being permitted so much of her own way, she was gracious, even in her anger. The idea too that Mrs. Porter should acknowledge her fault was soothing to her pride.

The report that one, or both, of the young ladies at Four-Oaks had concealed Mr. Thorne had reached Mrs. Porter's ears and she was anxious to exonerate Harry, but Mrs. Fanning, though by no means forbidding, would not allude to the subject herself, and so after some hesitation Mrs. Porter said,

"Mrs. Fanning I am anxious to make you understand that Harry had nothing to do with this affair of Mr. Thorne."

"I have never believed that she had," answered Mrs. Fanning.

Mrs. Porter had not expected such an answer; she was silent a moment, and then she said,

"But Marcia was placed in such very peculiar circumstances that it would be quite impossible to judge her justly unless they were fully understood, and in order that you should understand them I have come to acquaint you with a — a sort of family mystery" —

"Excuse me, Mrs. Porter," interrupted Mrs. Fanning, "I do not wish to be made a party to any mystery. I have already told you that I never imagined Harry to have anything to do with Mr. Thorne's affair; of Miss Fletcher's actions it is not for me to judge."

"Then let me explain in order to justify myself. I must be content to be misjudged perhaps by the world at large, for what I am about to say I have no right to reveal" —

"Then I beg, my dear Madam, that you will not confide it to me; I have no idle curiosity, and I dislike secrets. I candidly confess that it appears to me you have not exercised sufficient control over these two girls, but that is to be attributed, I can well believe, more to a too indulgent disposition than to neglect. Of course I cannot but regret that my niece should be the subject of such very derogatory reports, and I am particularly mortified at her visit to Mr. Brittain; I know Harry so well, however, that I can easily understand it must have been difficult to restrain her. I am not insensible to the kindness she has received at Four-Oaks, and we are only waiting for Mr. Fanning's return from the plantation to call and express our sense of your favors."

Mrs. Porter felt that Mrs. Fanning was polite but not cordial. She rejoiced, however, when she left the house, that she had prevented her revealing the secret which oppressed her.

As Mrs. Fanning stood watching her from the window and thinking what a very weak character she was, Mr. Fanning came in. He was so full of the communication he was about to make, he quite forgot that he had not seen his wife for several days.

"Eleanor!" he cried, "Who would believe it! Did you know that Mrs. Porter was Agnes Wallace's sister?"

"Who says so?" asked Mrs. Fanning, catching at a chair, while the same gray palor which had alarmed Harry when she mentioned Agnes' name, spread over her face.

"Who says so?"

"Why, Harry. I have been sitting up stairs with her, and such a time as she has been having; crying over the family disgraces. Charley came in for his share, and her father and mother, something about a lost lady-love, Lord knows what, there was no making head nor tail of it; and then she wound up by abusing herself for going to see Mr. Brittain."

"It is plain enough whom she means by her father's lost love," said Mrs. Fanning; "she had a great hue and cry after a miniature in that Mr. Thorne's possession, and when I came to question her the thing had found its way to the lawful owner, Theresa Hamilton. I do not understand anything at all about it, and I shall not trouble myself to learn, for I do not wish to encourage Harry in such whims. But really I have some curiosity to know if Mr. Vane ever did address Theresa?"

"No, I know he never did. Theresa is pretty enough even now to have lovers, but I never heard of any one addressing her except George Dunbar."

"Harry is so absurdly romantic! Why in the world she should have done such a very improper thing as to go to see Mr. Brittain I cannot imagine."

"Why, she says that Thorne threatened him at Myrtle Springs, because he thought Mr. Brittain had prejudiced her against him. I wonder if Harry and Sylvo have been getting up anything of a flirtation at Four-Oaks?"

"That is quite impossible!" said Mrs. Fanning, confidently. "Harry has too great respect for Mr. Brittain to think of such a thing, and she would never fall in love with him."

Mr. Middleton returned to Fanning House, not now to court Miss Vane, but to dazzle her with the magnificence she had scorned to accept. Mrs. Fanning, however, was ignorant of this, and still hoped to win him from his fancy for Miss Hart; but Miss Hart was secure of her prize. Harry's conduct obtained her aunt's unqualified approval: never had she treated Mr. Middleton with such graciousness and consideration; but that was not hard to do since she was relieved from his pretensions to her hand, and in sincere

repentance for past faults she had determined to reform thoroughly.

Mr. Brittain hoped in vain for a visit from her. She was so different from other girls that it did not seem to him anything out of the way that she should have acted as she did, and he knew her too well to suppose that her visit to his mother was any sign of a tender regard for himself. Nevertheless he determined that as soon as he could see her he would unravel the mystery of Mr. Thorne and the miniature, and — he was sure he would find Harry in the right. For several days past he had been allowed to come down stairs and enjoy the balmy evenings on the piazza; once or twice he had walked around the yard, and he looked forward eagerly to the day, when he might see Harry again. He had often had a glimpse of her as she rode by on horseback or drove in her aunt's open carriage. She had not once looked toward him, it was true, but he had made up his mind to hope, and there is a great deal in that.

He was sitting thus one evening, indulging a happy day-dream, when the click of the gate aroused him. It was not Harry, conjured up by a wish, but little Davy Poinsett with a basket of raspberries. He came up the steps with the eager importance of a child charged with a good deed.

"Aunt Tesa sent you them," he said, placing the basket on a book of engravings that rested on Mr. Brittain's knees.

"What in the world shall I do for aunt Tesa?" said Mr. Brittain. "Or for Aunt Tesa's little Davy who is so kind to bring them? Come let me show you some pictures?"

Davy came willingly enough. I like picture-books," he said, "better than spelling-books— Aunt Tesa has such a funny book with writing and pictures in it. Harry brought it to her one day, and she was crying."

"Who was crying?" said Mr. Brittain.

"Harry. But she was not mad. I like Harry, don't you?"

"Yes," said Mr. Brittain, absently.

"She is ever so much prettier than any of these pictures in this book, and when she stayed at our house she used to tell me such pretty stories."

Mrs. Brittain did not enjoy this praise as much as her son. "You should learn to read stories for yourself, David," said she.

"I am a learning," he returned; "but I do wish Harry

would come back to our house, because she is better than a book."

Mr. Brittain smiled to himself to hear his own thoughts uttered by a child. It was pleasant to hear Harry's praises from any lips, and he could have listened as long as it should please Davy to talk; but his mother chose to divert his prattle into another channel. In vain however, did Mrs. Brittain talk to him about ponies and dogs; the book of engravings he was turning over perpetually suggested some recollection of Harry. "Aunt Tessa has such a funny picture — a woman crying. She has on a shawl, and leaves on her head. Harry used to have it once."

Mr. Brittain looked up quickly and so did his mother, but neither spoke; each waited to hear what else the child would reveal. David, however, had said all he knew, and continued turning over the leaves of the book in silence, while Mr. Brittain pondered the words he had heard. Mrs. Brittain, too, had some private speculations of her own concerning the book and the picture Davy spoke of in which assuredly Harry had no part.

"Well, I must go," said Davy, "I have seen through all the pictures, and there is nothing no more for me to do."

"Be sure to tell your Aunt Theresa how much I thank her for the raspberries," said Mr. Brittain, raising his head, and as he did so, across the road he saw Miss Vane going home.

"I believe I will walk a little way, myself," said Mr. Brittain.

"Take care, Sylvester, you will fatigue yourself," said his mother.

"I shall not go far," he said.

Would his mother, *could* his mother have knitted so quietly if she had seen the object which attracted him? No.

Harry was walking on the terrace, her hands clasped before her, her head bent down. She had taken off her hat the better to enjoy the breeze, and her white muslin dress fluttered in the wind. She looked like an angel, if ever an angel carried a leghorn hat. She raised her head as Mr. Brittain came near, and a beautiful color mounted in her face, as she expressed her pleasure at seeing him.

"But you look pale?" she said.

He did indeed look pale, but it was because she was so rosy.

"I am afraid you are too impatient to get out; had you not better rest on this bench?"

"I will," said Mr. Brittain; "not because I am tired though, but that I may talk to you. Where have you been this evening, all alone?"

"To Four-Oaks; Janet is so much worse, and they sent for me to see her."

"Are they all well there?"

"All but Janet, and she is better this evening than she has been this week."

"What has become of Mr. Thorne?"

The question startled Harry. "He is gone," she said, looking at him wonderingly.

"I bear no malice," said Mr. Brittain, smiling, "but I am very curious to know if you ever got that miniature?"

"Yes," said Harry, "you know I told you that I would have it; but it was because it was of the greatest importance to me. But I am sorry I had to send to Mr. Thorne for it."

"Why? I thought Mr. Thorne was a favorite of yours."

"No, I do not like him," said Harry. "I do not know how he came by that miniature which I supposed was my father's — but perhaps" —

"Perhaps what? I do not understand you."

"I cannot explain, it is some one's else secret."

"Not yours?" he said. Thanks to little Davy's revelation about the book and the picture, Harry's obscurity could not mystify him, but he questioned her because he liked to make her talk to him.

"No, not mine," she said, "but I have a secret which I wish to talk to you about. Indeed it is not a secret, but it is something concerning myself which perhaps you ought to know. I do not know if I ought to tell you, but I was very unhappy the night you were shot, because Mr. Thorne had threatened you at Myrtle Springs, because — because — he thought — you influenced me against him. I forgot all about it until after it happened, and then I felt as if it were all my fault. I was so unhappy I did not know what to do, and that is why I went to see you."

Mr. Brittain had made up his mind to hope; therefore he would not be discouraged, even though Harry, having now accounted for the indecorum of her visit, rose to go.

"It is too late for you to be out alone," said he; "it is already dark, let me go with you."

Harry was loth to trouble him, but he insisted ; he even made the darkness an excuse for insisting upon her taking his arm, and so they turned into that long and thickly screened walk which is known in Netherford by the name of the Confessional. Mr. Brittain did not remember the name, but a few of the superstitious old ladies of Netherford might have averred from what happened that the place had its influence upon him. He slackened his pace, Harry thought because he was so feeble, but he wanted to gain time. He had taken the little fingers which rested upon his arm within his own feverish hand, and after several resolutions to speak, he began, calling her for the first time by her familiar Christian name.

“ Harry, I too have a secret, a secret which I have cherished a long while in silence, and which I wish to confide to you.”

The slender little fingers pressed his unmistakably, and in the dim light which pervaded the walk Mr. Brittain thought he saw a smile on the gentle face upturned to his. His heart gave a great bound, — not for joy. Neither the pressure of his fingers, nor the smile was exactly what he had expected, though the pressure was not bold nor the smile triumphant. He walked a little farther before he had courage to say another word, and when he spoke again they were half way down the walk.

“ I — I — am presumptuous, perhaps,” he said, “ and — and — I know I have had little upon which to build my hopes, but I have loved long in silence, and the time has come when I must speak ” —

He paused. Perhaps he would rather have acted out the rest in pantomime, but Harry said in a low, but intensely sympathizing voice,

“ Go on.”

Her command had the effect of making him stand stock still. He dropped her hand and looked at her. Harry was laughing ! Softly, and pleasantly, it was true, but it was more than he could bear.

“ This is so apropos you know,” said she ; “ we are in the Confessional ! ”

“ And I,” said Mr. Brittain, with a face so pale Harry never forgot it, “ am in earnest.”

A light began to dawn upon her mind. She leaned against an iron settee that had been recently fixed in the



walk, and looking wildly about her as though she would have run away, stammered forth,

"I thought you were going to tell me about Alice Munsey," and covered her face with her hands.

For one moment Mr. Brittain thought, "If Ralph Kennett were standing before me now I would knock him down!" The next he attempted to draw her hands from her face.

"Listen to me," he said; "there never was an Alice Munsey; that was a fabrication. The person who drew me from the lake was a peasant-woman, ugly and coarse. How could you have believed all that nonsense?" But Harry resisted every effort to remove her hands. "I never knew an Alice Munsey," he went on, "I never loved any one as I love you."

"Oh, me! oh, me!" said Harry, behind her hands, "do not, do not!"

"But I have begun," said Mr. Brittain, "and I must go on; you might have seen it for months past." And Harry acknowledged to herself that she might have seen it, if she had not so fancifully disposed of his heart to Marcia, and some imaginary heroine of the past.

"For Heaven's sake, do not sob so," he said, "I cannot bear it. I do not blame you, but now that you know I love you, that I have loved you ever since the day at Bennet's Pool,—oh! Harry, what can you say to me? Will you love me?"

"Oh, no! I must speak truly, you know: I do not love you, oh! I wish I did," she said, wringing her hands as she saw how stunned and ghastly he looked.

He smiled at the singular close of her sentence, and one more question passed his lips,

"Will you ever love me?"

"Oh! do not ask me!" said Harry. "Go away and forget me; why should you love me?"

But he did not go away; he leaned against a tree, the last in the row, and shaded his eyes with his hand. He reviewed once more the bright visions which had cheered his sick pillow and mocked him with false hopes: slowly he saw them fade away, and a dull darkness seemed to settle on all his future which only that evening had looked so bright.

"Will he never move?" thought Harry. Timidly she touched his arm, saying,

"You will be ill if you stay out so late."

He started, sighed, and walked to the gate with her in silence.

Poor Harry felt like a criminal. No sorrow she had ever known had cost her such a pang as this love which she could not return.

"Mr. Brittain," she said, "you do not deserve to be unhappy — I wish you would not care about me."

She put out a little trembling hand, which was instantly clasped in both his. He looked at her as though it were the last sight of her face he would ever have.

"Do not fear, Harry," he said, "I have loved you, I do love you too well to pain you by any exhibition of misery. Be happy yourself; not for worlds would I see you otherwise."

He dropped her hand and turned away, but when Harry was out of sight he sank upon the iron chair exhausted.

"Thank Heaven!" he said aloud, "hard as this is to bear, it would have been harder still had pity wrung a false avowal from her lips."

"Sylvester!" cried his mother, as he came creeping in about an hour later, "where on earth have you been?" "You have worn yourself out."

"I have indeed worn myself out," he said, "I will go to my room."

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

### THE MODEL LETTER-WRITER.



HE spring had grown into summer, the wheat had been reaped in the fields lying back of Fanning House and Four-Oaks, and the moan of the dove and the whistle of the partridge sounded all day from the stubble. The people of Netherford began to take alarm at the coming hot weather and to fly their abundant orchards and comfortable homes for the scanty fare and contracted apartments of some watering-place.

The day of departure was most welcome to Harry ; more welcome even than the day whereon she bade adieu to the home of the Poinsetts ; for she lived in the constant dread of encountering Mr. Brittain. Not that she thought herself in danger of persecution from him, but, without a particle of vanity, she believed so entirely in the depth of his attachment for her that she would willingly have gone away forever to avoid the pain of seeing his heart breaking daily, as she fully believed it was. Yet, so inconsistent is human nature, when she did meet him once, the entire absence of anything like agitation on his part caused her a sensation very like mortification.

Mrs. Fanning took her niece to spend the summer among the mountains, where she expected to meet a quiet party of friends, among whom was a very desirable match in the person of a Mr. Balmerton.

The Brittaines went to Myrtle Springs, their usual haunt. A trial it undoubtedly was to Mr. Brittain to go among the scenes where he had first known and loved Harry, and yet the first spot he visited was Bennet's Pool. His mother had now no occasion to fret at the attentions shown by him to the ladies, but she would have been happier if he had been more inclined to mingle with the people on the piazza, or even in the ball-room. He sat apart, silent and abstracted, and yet he did not look so woe-begone as might have been expected. He had not forgotten Harry, he did not try to forget her, he did not wish to forget her. As often as he thought of his rejection he remembered also that Harry had never suspected his feelings for her, and herein he found encouragement to hope.

And Harry meanwhile was looking by moonlight upon mountain scenery, or gathering various colored mosses in morning walks, escorted by Mr. Balmerton. Mrs. Fanning observed with great satisfaction that she received that gentleman's attentions with becoming dignity, and that she showed no disposition to indulge in a flirtation. But where were Harry's thoughts ? Mr. Balmerton could not understand why she so often called him Mr. Brittain.

Mrs. Dean's health was no better than usual, and yet she did not hurry away to the Springs. Later in the season she did follow Mrs. Fanning, but not until she found it useless to contend against her brother's predilection for Miss Fletcher. Mr. Thorne had disappeared from Netherford,

and his name was never mentioned at Four-Oaks in Mr. Kennett's hearing, but Mrs. Dean rang the changes upon it unceasingly in the vain hope of putting an end to Ralph's fatal fancy. But Mr. Kennett seemed to possess a secret talisman against the name, or as his sister sometimes, nay, oftentimes said, was the victim of witchcraft. He showed no disposition to visit the Springs, or the mountains, or the sea shore, but day after day his buggy was seen at Four-Oaks. As long as Harry remained there Mrs. Dean's mind was comparatively easy, but after she left it was a great cross to find that her brother went oftener to Mr. Fletcher's than to Mr. Fanning's.

"Ralph," she would say, "you would let the very best chances slip through your fingers. I never saw anything like you, everybody will get ahead of you in Miss Vane's good graces."

"We are on the best possible terms," he would reply.

"Then, for mercy's sake, what are you waiting for? Why don't you get married?"

"I am not ready yet."

"Not ready? When 'yes' is as good as said now."

"I think you are mistaken; Miss Vane would not say 'yes.'"

"Your head is so full of that brick-house girl that you are lost to common sense. I tell you what it is, Ralph, she won't do. What in the world you can see in her puzzles me. They say you are there almost every day; do you intend to marry her? I want a plain answer for once, I certainly have a right to know."

"My dear sister, whenever I know myself, you shall certainly know."

"Then if you are only amusing yourself you are losing time; you ought to be with the Fannings now, who are much the nicest people. I never liked those Fletchers, never, and that girl particularly."

And then Mr. Kennett would look at his watch, order his buggy to be brought to the door, and away he would go to Four-Oaks. And watching him from the window Mrs. Dean would say,

"I do believe he is going there now," and away she would go to talk over her troubles with Sallie Hart, who had not yet gone to purchase that magnificent trosseau which excited the envy and admiration of her friends far and near. It was

more than Mrs. Dean dared, to animadvert upon the Fletchers to Miss Sallie in her brother's presence, but she expressed herself very freely in his absence.

"Sallie, don't you think that headstrong boy has gone, and I verily believe to those odious Fletchers."

And Miss Sallie, whose left fore-finger supported a heavy diamond ring, smiled and made answer,

"So few are blessed with prudent foresight in matters of this sort; I mean in forming matrimonial connections."

"I am sure I was very prudent, Sallie," said Mrs. Dean, querulously; "I never indulged in any romantic fancy like Ralph. But I blame Aunt Marshall as much as I do him. If she would not keep that room for him in town he would not be there forever. I hinted to her that it would be more to her advantage to rent it, and she answered my hint in plain speech, so ill-bred you know, that as long as she had a roof over her head she meant to keep a room for him. Ah, me! Ralph always was a fool about some things, and he never would be guided by me."

This proof of folly Mr. Kennett often gave, but Mrs. Marshall was more to blame for his persistency in going to Four-Oaks than Mrs. Dean knew. That motherly aunt, ever ready to open her arms to any one her nephew might choose for her niece, had not been slow to discover his liking for Miss Fletcher. She asked no questions, but she kept her eyes open, when "Ralp'" came home one evening, just before Mr. Middleton's famous theatricals, without a word to say; when he refused his tea, and did not offer to play backgammon with her; she did not attempt to pry into his secret, but noting the signs of the times, she took up her knitting and stayed in the sitting-room with him instead of running after "that bothersome Jerry." And very soon she heard, without any solicitation on her part, all the particulars of his interview with Marcia. Antiquated, wrinkled, and faded as she was, Mrs. Marshall had still a tender sympathy with the concerns of youth, and a most abundant charity for youth's follies and mistakes. A love affair was in her eyes the most interesting, the most beautiful, the most important thing in life.

"And now Ralp'," said the old lady on this occasion, "you say she made no objection to you, only her father did not want her to marry, and you think she likes you if she could only get rid of that Thorne, don't you give it up; you

think she is worth having and so she is worth struggling for. Have a little faith and a little patience; old men have been known to melt before now. Keep up a stout heart, and you'll win your way."

This advice was much more to his taste than any Mrs. Dean ever offered, and he followed it. He found that he did win his way too, so far as to have made his society an absolute necessity to Mr. Fletcher, who saw but little more of the Netherford world than his old uncle before him. And in spite of all the mystery connected with Mr. Thorne, he did think that Marcia liked him more than a friend.

He was going on "swimmingly," as he reported to his aunt, when Mr. Brittain met with his disaster at the hands of Mr. Thorne. Anxious to know from his own observation how Marcia would act under the circumstances he decided to carry the intelligence himself to Four-Oaks. The scene he there witnessed convinced him that his suit was hopeless; he resolved to go there no more, and he kept his resolution. But he had gone so far that it cost him a struggle which it was not possible to conceal from his sympathizing old aunt. And while Mrs. Dean was rejoicing that the affair was nipped in the bud, Mrs. Marshall was taxing her wits for some way to alleviate a disappointment which distressed her because it worried "Ralpy."

"If there were not such a mystery about it," he had once said, "I would not mind it so much."

"Well now," thought Mrs. Marshall, after this, "I will get to the bottom of this or die a trying."

And so one day she called on Miss Vane, but Harry and the old lady kept their own counsel, and the world never knew that Mrs. Marshall had any object in view than to pay a visit to the daughter of Harriet Fanning. Mr. Kennett himself knew no better till weeks after, when Harry was about starting on her summer trip. He had abandoned his plantation home, stabled his horses in town, and taken up his residence altogether with his aunt. He was coming in one evening too late for tea, and going directly to his room when his aunt came rushing into the hall, her spectacles awry, her cap ribbons flying, and begged him to come into her room.

"Some of these boys now," thought he, "have been playing tricks on the old lady."

"Sit up here, Ralpy honey," said the old lady, dusting a

chair which had not a speck of dust upon it, "I want to have a good long talk with you. Where are my specs? Bless me! here they are on my nose! And now for my bag; oh! here it is," and she drew forth a bead bag, not so stylish as the one she sported on dress occasions, but quite as ample. "Ralp', I've had a letter from Mr. Thorne."

"You have!" said Mr. Kennett, starting up, "let me see it."

"No, — now boy," said the old lady, waving him off, "wait a bit till I say my say first."

"But how came he to write to you?"

"Why it is but manners to answer a lady's letter, you know," said his aunt, diving into her bag.

"Surely Aunt Marshall, you did not write to him?" said Mr. Kennett, in alarm.

"Yes, I did," said she, nodding her head. "Do you think I could stand seeing you take a thing to heart and not do something to ease your mind?"

"Oh! Aunt Marshall! what did you say to him? More than you ought, I am afraid."

"Well," said the old lady, "I made a pretty clear case of it, I think;" and she smoothed Mr. Thorne's letter on her knee.

"Let me see it?" said Mr. Kennett, stretching out his hand.

"No, you must hear me talk first" —

"But where is Mr. Thorne, how did you know where to send your letter?"

"Just be quiet, will you? and let me talk; I'm coming to that as fast as I can. You see I didn't know where to find him, and I went to Miss Vane" —

"To Miss Vane!" said Mr. Kennett in horror; "why you could not do anything to incense her more. I heard her give old Dunbar a terrible scoring for insinuating that she knew where Mr. Thorne was. 'Nature made me a woman, Mr. Dunbar,' said she, 'but I am neither a gossip nor a tale-bearer. If I knew where Mr. Thorne was I should not tell any but a man who had courage and ability sufficient to keep him from escaping.' She is very much annoyed at the report that she helped to hide him."

"Well," said Mrs. Marshall, "she has a pretty good share of Harriet Fanning's fire, but she's got her mother's heart too. She was mad enough when I asked the question,

but when she found out why I wanted to know, why bless the child! she was all love and penitence. She did not know where Mr. Thorne was, but she knew where a married sister of his lived, and I sent my letter to her care, and sure enough it got to him. And now Ralpy, here's what I want to say, *don't never despair of nobody*. There ain't any so bad in this world but what they can be touched in some point. And when these boys get drunk and cut up so, and they tell me 'tain't no use to expect any good from 'em, I always say it will do 'em good to remember that one old woman had faith in 'em. Now here was this Mr. Thorne; he was a mighty unruly boy, and I did not like him because he was in your way; but I thought the Lord sent him here, and though I don't belong to your persuasion, Ralpy, you need not believe there ain't faith in the Lord to be found outside of St. Botolf's. The Lord sent him here, thinks I, and I'll not send him away."

"Good Aunt Marshall!" said her nephew, "any one but you would have thought the Devil sent him, and turned him out of doors."

"No Ralpy, the Devil never sends anything unless we open the doors to his messengers ourselves; always remember that. And Mr. Thorne kept out of my way when he warn't fit to be seen, and when he was sober he acted the gentleman, and I can see by his letter that kindness wasn't thrown away on him."

"Well, but what of the letter? You see I am very impatient."

"Well I am coming to that. You see I did not want to compromise you, boy, so I was very guarded. I told him, in the first place that Mr. Brittain was on the mend, that I knew he, Mr. Thorne, was not so bad in heart as to have wished the death of a good man, and that therefore he would be rejoiced to know this good news. Then I told him that since the good Lord had interposed and kept the stain of blood from resting on his soul he ought, in gratitude for such a mercy, to turn away from the evil of his ways. I reminded him that he had every inducement to do so, for Mr. Brittain, so far from being vindictive, would be the first man to help him on to a better life, and that he had talents which he ought to be ashamed to waste, and that, as folks believed, he was engaged to a girl, beautiful and good who loved him, and he ought not to bring sorrow upon her. I



told him I supposed he knew I meant Miss M. F. You see now, Ralpy, I said nothing about you, for I had just reasoned this way: if he was engaged to her it would not be right to break it up, but it was well enough to encourage him to reform if only for her sake, and then if you knew it to be a fact that she was engaged to him, why, you would have to stop hoping, and may be you'd stop caring, and any way it could do no harm."

"Why Aunt Marshall!" said Mr. Kennett admiringly, "what a diplomatist you are!"

Mrs. Marshall understood enough of her nephew's big word to know that he was paying her a compliment. "I was considered something of a letter-writer in my youth," said she, complacently. "But now here is Mr. Thorne's letter, which you may read for yourself."

Mr. Kennett took it, while his aunt watched him with glistening eyes, but before he reached the bottom of the page he dashed it down, caught his aunt up from her chair, danced the polka with her all round the room, making up for the deficiency of her steps by extra ones of his own.

"Hurrah! for Aunt Marshall!" he cried, when he sat her down. "And hurrah for Mr. Thorne! And hurrah for Miss Fletcher too! Don't you think she is a brick, Aunt Marshall, and every inch worthy of your incomparable nephew? Her brother! what obtuse idiots we people of Netherford are!"

"But don't you go to enlighten them now, for that is not to be; just finish the letter and you'll see. He makes no objection to your knowing it, for though I did not mention you he does, quite handsomely."

Mr. Kennett picked up the letter and read hurriedly, half aloud, "mother a widow with two children — married Mr. Fletcher — very queer man — Marcia the best sister in the world — he a very bad boy — mother been dead some years — he growing no better — rather worse — step-father forbids his sisters to acknowledge him until he be reformed — a plan which does not work well" —

"That is enough, Mr. Thorne," said Mr. Kennett; "much obliged to you, but can't stay to hear you out."

"Oh! but Ralp', Ralp', stop," cried Mrs. Marshall; "you see he goes on to say that Marcia could not find it in her heart to obey her father strictly, specially as she had made her mother a promise to do all she could to make a good boy of him."

"Dear aunt," said Mr. Kennett, drawing on his gloves, "my heart interpreted that when I first read he was her brother."

"But Ralp', you are not to tell it you know, and do stay a minute to hear how handsome he talks about you."

"No I won't," said Mr. Kennett, "you can appreciate that better than I can, you know; but I will stay to make you a speech. It is quite in vain for me to attempt to hide from your penetration that I am what the boys call 'dead in love' with Miss Fletcher, but I just want to inform you that my first love was, and is, a certain Mrs. Marshall. I think Miss Fletcher beautiful beyond compare, but I assure you that Mrs. Marshall is the paragon of her sex, the 'wisest, virtouosest, discreetest, best!' And I hope I may live to see her as highly appreciated by Mrs. Kennett."

"Oh! but Ralp'," cried the old lady, running after him and catching him at the front door, "bless my life, Ralp', I haven't given you a mouthful of supper; come back, that's a dear boy, and have something to eat."

"No, I don't want supper," said he, slipping through the door; "but you may sit up for me and I'll tell you a story when I come back, a true story, you know. Yes, and I'll stand treat too; we'll have some brandy and oysters. Oh! no, I forgot, June hasn't an R in it, and ladies don't drink brandy; we'll have some sherry cobblers, so live in the hope of seeing me again."

"Bless the boy!" said the old lady, settling her cap, "how he has rushed me about. Well I'm sure he makes up for Louisa."

She sat quietly down to her knitting, so happy in her thoughts the hours flew by unheeded. It was past twelve o'clock when her nephew came in.

"Why Aunt Marshall!" said he, "I really do believe you are partial to the 'ardent.' If you have not been sitting up for a Jerry Gobbler!"

"Well I'll drink it in good company, anyhow."

"Here they come," said Mr. Kennett; "I stopped at old Lester's and ordered them as I came back."

"Why, is old Lester's shop open at this late hour?"

"No, but I made him get up out of bed to make them. This is no trifling occasion you see."

"Well, to-be-sure, we've got but one time to be young," said Mrs. Marshall.

"Bring 'em in Lester," said Mr. Kennett; "I am going to be married before I die, and you may be sure if you had grumbled at me to-night I would never send you a piece of my wedding cake."

"Laws Massa Kennett, I allers serves you with honor, sir, hopes to see you married, sir, often before you die."

"Don't be so extravagant of good wishes, Lester, once is often enough. That will do, just put them on the table."

Lester put the glasses down and departed, and Mr. Kennett presented his aunt with one, and took one himself.

"Drink, Aunt Marshall," said he, "and then we'll talk, for I promised you a true story you know, and we'll drink first, because '*in vino veritas.*' I rather think the company you've kept for the last fifteen, or twenty years — which is it? — would enable you to understand that with very little guessing. But first I'll give you a toast, which is, 'Four-Oaks and four people, long may they live.' Wine makes people see double sometimes I know, but you see there is a sort of double and tender signification in my toast, not double and twisted by any means, for I perfectly understand what I am talking about, and *twisted* means *misted.*"

"If you understand yourself it's more than I do," said Mrs. Marshall, laughing, "I wish you would get to your story."

"Let me say my say, I am coming to that. And first to unravel the mystery of my toast. I know you hate selfishness, and so I want to let you know that your nephew being in love himself remembers a friend in like predicament: I allude to Mr. Sylvo Brittain."

"Ralp' you don't mean to say *he* wants her too?" said Mrs. Marshall, in a tone of despair.

"Well I rather think he won't get her," said Mr. Kennett; "but fortunately he does not want *her*, but her friend, Miss Harry Vane."

"Why you don't say so? Do you think she will have him?"

"Well it is not easy to say, but I think she would make a great mistake if she said 'no,' and so I wish him success. But mind now, Aunt Marshall, if you ever tell this Sylvo will growl worse than that pet bear of Mrs. Winstanley's, for he seems to have a horror of her suspecting it."

"Well, well! he is considerable different from you. I suppose now you saw Marcia and told her everything to-night?"

"No, I did not see her at all, I saw her father, and we talked until it was so late I could not ask for her, but I am going to see her to-morrow. I always think plain speaking is best, so I told him everything about myself and my hopes and fears, and what a blessed old auntie I had at home, and what a letter-writer she was, and how she would correspond with young men, and how the worse the young man the better she thought him" —

"Oh! Ralp' do hush your stories and tell the truth."

"And is not that true? I'll take my oath it is, every word of it. And Mr. Fletcher thought my aunt a very sensible woman, and me a very sensible man, and his daughter an angel, and his step-son not quite so much of a scape-grace after all. I tried to show him that it placed his daughter in a dubious light to keep the relationship a secret, but he has some peculiar notions: he says she ought not to mind the public frown if her brother's reformation is to be brought about by refusing to acknowledge him until he behaves better. All of which I think is nonsense myself, and I believe if Mr. Thorne would ask to be received, the request would be granted, and I am going to write to him, and get Sylvo to do so too. There is the clock striking two; who would have thought it was that late? So I will just say good-morning to you, Aunt Marshall. 'This story to be continued.'"

Mr. Kennett went to Four-Oaks the next morning, saw Marcia, wrote to Mr. Thorne, and from that time forth acted in such a manner as to crush all Mrs. Dean's hopes of an alliance with Miss Vane.

Harry had left town, and it was decided that she should not be informed of the new state of things at Four-Oaks until her return, as by that time it was hoped Mr. Fletcher would consent to let Marcia and Janet receive their brother.

"But," Mr. Kennett had objected, "if Henry Thorne comes back here how will it be between him and Harry? Was there was not a sort of tie between them?"

"If there ever was it was ruptured long ago," said Marcia. "Henry liked Harry very much at one time, indeed I think he likes her still, but Harry does not care for him, and never did, I am convinced. I do not think she meant deliberately to trifle with him, but she was so young and thoughtless, and Henry himself is so unsteady I could not but regret it if Harry should have been attached to him,

though I think now he will be all we could wish ; but after what has passed Harry will never think of him."

Mr. Kennett was satisfied : he was too anxious for Mr. Brittain's success to care about Mr. Thorne's disappointment, and knowing the doubts which had tormented his friend he wrote him a letter calculated to set his mind at rest forever.

It was no longer necessary for Marcia to correspond clandestinely with her brother, and Mrs. Porter looked forward quite as eagerly as the sisters to the coming fall when Henry Thorne would pay them a visit. The secret which Mrs. Fanning had refused to hear might then be made known, and she in a measure exonerated. Yet Mrs. Porter felt that she would have been better satisfied could she have explained her conduct to Mrs. Fanning, but it was now impossible to approach her again on the subject. However, she could not doubt that Harry would listen to all she had to say, and she waited in hope and patience.

People wondered why Mr. Kennett should be so often at Four-Oaks after what had happened. Miss Grace Innibee declared "she was on her head to know ;" an unfortunate expression which gave her the nickname of Topsy-Turvy from Mr. Kennett who always honored her with that title when he spoke of her at Four-Oaks. Her curiosity however was to be satisfied sooner than she or any one else imagined. As the summer wore on poor little Janet wasted away, and at last she asked her father to send for Mr. Thorne. Her request could not be refused, and for two little weeks she was happy in having him with her. He made good Mrs. Marshall's house his home, but he was at Four-Oaks every day. Still he never saw Mr. Fletcher until after Janet was laid by the side of old Anthony Fletcher. It was the day after the funeral when Marcia and Mr. Kennett had been to place fresh flowers on her grave that they met Mr. Thorne coming from the house as they were returning. He had been to see Mr. Fletcher, but what had been the nature of the interview was only guessed at : Mr. Fletcher never alluded to it, and one result only did Mr. Thorne communicate. He was going as supercargo on a vessel bound for China.

"It is the only kind of business I am fit for," said he, "and it is the life I'd like best to lead. The old gentleman was not so very hard on me, not half so hard as I

deserved; thanks to you, Marcia, I've no doubt. Mr. Kennett if you don't think her an angel you ought to."

Mr. Paul and his sisters returned from the Springs about a week after Janet's death, and then Miss Grace stood on her feet again, for she had not been at home a day before she knew the history of Mr. Thorne. Mr. Paul looked rather dejected, but Miss Grace was in charming spirits; she had something to talk about.

"Miss Edna did you ever in your life hear of such queer people? Why what an unnatural old fellow that Mr. Fletcher must be! Dear me! and that Mr. Thorne is so good-looking. I'll bet my eyes there was more truth than poetry in that report about Harry Vane hiding him."

"She is quite capable of it," said Miss Edna.

"What makes me believe it is, that Mrs. Fanning looks as smiling as a basket of chips whenever it is mentioned, and Harry looks as black as a thunder-cloud."

This conversation took place on the terrace one afternoon, and Mr. Kennett passed by as the last remark was made.

"Indeed Miss Grace," said he, "it is easy to guess the subject of your conversation, but Miss Vane cannot shine in borrowed plumes, and Miss Fletcher, and Miss Fletcher only, had the honor of hiding Mr. Thorne."

"Youth is so proverbially *etourdie*," said Miss Edna, "that one cannot wonder to see them commit blunders, particularly if they have the misfortune to be educated at a boarding-school; and Mrs. Porter, I fancy, is not exactly as strict in keeping *surveillance* over her charges as she ought to be. Few women are qualified to undertake such an *emploi*."

Miss Edna's judgment for once was just. Yet Mrs. Porter was not wilfully negligent, she was only weakly indulgent. Obligated to seek for some means of support, the only position which she found open to her was one she was little fitted to fill, but it would have been as hard to make Harry believe this as to convince her that Mlle. Celeste was not the daughter of a Marquis. Mr. Kennett himself was so fully convinced of the justice of Miss Edna's remarks that he had nothing to say in reply, but when he glanced at Blanche, whom Miss Edna boasted was perfectly *comme il faut*, he thought Mrs. Porter's pupils infinitely more pleasing.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## THE LITTLE MATCH-MAKER.



It was the middle of August, and Mrs. Fanning had returned to Fanning House! The gossips of Netherford were utterly at a loss to account for it; Miss Selina Dalrymple, who always reported what Mrs. Fanning would wish to have believed concerning herself, was still absent, and although the shrewdest people well knew that Miss Dalrymple's reports were official, and therefore calculated to conceal the truth, they would gladly have hailed her arrival, for then they might have obtained a clue. Mrs. Fanning had lived in Netherford fifteen years, and fifteen summers she had passed at various fashionable resorts, and never yet had she been known to return before the middle or end of September.

"Is Miss Harry going to be married?" asked old Mrs. Winstanley.

"I am not aware that Harry ever intends to marry at all," had been the freezing reply.

And then Mrs. Winstanley went her way and wondered to all she met, if Mr. Fanning had sunk property in "them railway sheers."

Miss Vane, had she chosen to speak, could have explained satisfactorily. She did not generally know the secret springs of her aunt's movements, but in this case she knew them to her cost. Two weeks before she had said "no" to Mr. Balmerton; not with uncontrollable laughter as she did to Mr. Dunbar, not with tears and sobs as she did to Mr. Brittain, nor yet with altogether such cool indifference as she had displayed toward some others; but she had said it decidedly, and he had quietly acquiesced in her decision. But Mrs. Fanning was not willing to acquiesce in it.

"With girls," she said to Mr. Balmerston, nine times out of ten 'no' means 'yes,' or at least 'try again.'" So she urged him again to the charge. But Harry had not said "no" by mistake; she said "no" again, and Mr. Balmerston left for home.

And then Mrs. Fanning took her to task. She had taken her to task after Mr. Balmerton's first rejection, but very gently. She had always impressed it upon her young nieces-in-charge not to be too eager to say "yes," and therefore she could not blame Harry for saying "no" at first, but she wished her to say "yes," at last, and so she bade her remember that Mr. Balmerton was a very timid man. Harry did remember it, and for this very reason she was particularly disturbed at having to refuse him again. Mr. Brittain's declaration had done this much for her, that while it increased her sense of the honor, it entirely destroyed her enjoyment of the triumph in the offer of a man's heart and hand. But though Mr. Balmerton entirely acquitted her of anything like coquetry, nay, even thanked her for the considerate manner in which she had treated him, Mrs. Fanning's temper and patience were completely upset. The most superior ladies will sometimes give vent to their vexation in language more energetic than elegant.

"I am tired of dragging out my life at watering-places," she said, "a prey to young girls' caprices! I shall go home, and I give you fair warning that I shall stay there. Do not expect me to make any more sacrifices for you, you ungrateful girl! I wash my hands of you, altogether; you won't be guided by me, and now you may manage your affairs yourself."

The fiat had gone forth, and the trunks were ordered to be packed. Poor Harry dropped some very briny tears over the finery she was collecting for Phebe to fold away, not at the thought of going back to Netherford, not even at her aunt's angry words, but at the painful fact that two men were sincerely attached to her, and because of the hardness of her heart she could not say "yes" to either.

The return to Netherford was rather agreeable than otherwise, for both sympathy and curiosity now attracted her strongly to Four-Oaks. A letter from Mrs. Porter had informed her of Janet's death, and afterwards one from Marcia had shyly hinted at "Love's young dream," winding up most enigmatically with:



"I am not ashamed to throw open my closet, for the skeleton which inhabited there so long has disappeared — disappeared, did I say? I should have written, is clothed with life and promise. Oh! Harry, I have so much to tell you."

In a tumult of hope and doubt Harry hastened to Four-Oaks as soon as she possibly could after her return. But her mind was set at rest before a word was spoken, for the first person she met was Mr. Kennett, and one glance at his face assured her that there was no longer any rivalry between him and Mr. Thorne. He took her up stairs to the little sitting-room over the porch where he and Marcia and Mrs. Porter each had a tale to tell.

"And now, Miss Harry," said Mr. Kennett, in conclusion, "do not be incredulous about Henry Thorne's reformation, for I have undertaken to stand sponsor for it on the faith of my Aunt Marshall, who says in the most negatively positive manner, *don't never despair of nobody*; a sentiment which speaks the goodness of her heart, and which moreover contains so much wisdom that I shall hasten to impart it to Mr. Brittain as soon as he returns.

Up jumped Harry. "I must go home," said she, "if it is 'on the edge of the dark,' but I do not like gentlemen who are engaged to be married; Mrs. Porter I must beg you to go home with me."

Harry had more in view in asking Mrs. Porter to go with her than merely to put a stop to Mr. Kennett's hints about Mr. Brittain. She fancied that Mrs. Porter regarded her aunt with unkind feelings, because of Agnes Wallace, and she wanted to plead for her. Her first question when they came out of the house was,

"Mrs. Porter, why did you not tell me your sister's history?"

"My dear child, why should I tell it you?"

"Ah! but I know already," said Harry, "and from my inmost heart I am sorry."

"Ah! Harry, I would have spared you the knowledge of it."

"But I would rather know it," said Harry, "because you see I want you to forgive Aunt Eleanor."

"What had she to do with it?" said Mrs. Porter.

"Oh! what have I done?" cried Harry. "Did you not know it? Oh! why did I say anything about it?"

"Harry, if your aunt had anything to do with it I can forgive it, because she certainly did not know what would come of breaking off that engagement. All she could have to do with it was influencing your uncle; and, my dear, if he could be influenced to do it, his love must have been very weak. Your aunt in influencing your uncle only did what all relations think they have a right to do when a man fancies some one whom they cannot fancy."

"Oh! that I had never told you!" cried Harry. "Oh! what an unfortunate bungler I am!"

"Harry, it is a thing of the past," said Mrs. Porter; "I have endeavored to forgive all concerned in it."

"Then you do not think hardly of my aunt?" said Harry. "Oh! for my sake, do not."

"No Harry," said Mrs. Porter, "because I would sue to your aunt, also, for forgiveness. I did not discharge my duty to you as I should have done, when she left you to my care."

"What harm did I suffer in your hands?" said Harry, warmly.

"Ah! my child! it was no small harm to be the subject of derogatory reports. Your aunt was very justly offended with me."

"This' old world," said Harry, "is so meddlesome! Every one who knows me knows I did not hide Mr. Thorne, and the rest may think what they please."

"Ah! Harry, it will not do to be indifferent to the opinion of the world."

"That is what Uncle Poinsett told me long ago, and I believe he was right: but I do not blame you one bit, Mrs. Porter; I think you did very right."

And full of this conviction Harry parted with her friend at the corner by St. Botolf's, and ran on home to impart to her aunt all she had heard.

"Oh! Aunt Eleanor!" she cried, "Mr. Kennett and Marcia are actually engaged!"

This was very bitter news to Mrs. Fanning. "Well, Harry," said she, "I am not at all surprised to hear it; every girl it seems knows how to make use of her opportunities except yourself."

"Oh! Aunt Eleanor, you do not want to be rid of me?"

"No, my dear; you know very well no such sentiment ever actuated me; I have never had anything in view but

your own good. But you yourself, if you could take an unprejudiced view of things, would acknowledge that it is a mortifying reflection that Miss Fletcher has had the wisdom to leave Mr. Thorne for you."

"But, dearest auntie!" cried Harry, with a cheery laugh, "he is her brother!"

"Her brother! how is that possible?"

"Her mother was a Mrs. Thorne — oh! Aunt Eleanor; it is the strangest story! Mrs. Porter went to meet the Fletchers in Virginia, and she found Marcia corresponding with and receiving visits from Mr. Thorne, and she thought him a lover, and she talked with Marcia about it, and Marcia told her all about it. Her mother made her promise, when she was dying, that she would never desert her brother, and her father forbade her to have anything to do with him until he would quit — quit drinking, and all that sort of thing; and Mrs. Porter was so sorry for her she gave her every opportunity to see her brother, and kept her secret faithfully; for Marcia would not disobey her father except in writing to her brother and seeing him; she never acknowledged him for her brother to any one until Mr. Fletcher gave her leave, and she had so much influence over him that she prevented him from ever proclaiming it. Oh! Aunt Eleanor, is it not touching to think how devoted they were?"

"No, Harry," said Mrs. Fanning, "I can see nothing in it but a very foolish mystery. And a mystery is my abhorrence; not only is it in very bad taste, but it is exceedingly impolitic to cherish, and I am astonished that Mr. Fletcher should not have had penetration and forethought sufficient to see that such a plan would never do. As to Mrs. Porter, I see no reason to change my opinion; she has acted like a very amiable, but a very weak woman. She was employed by Mr. Fletcher to take charge of his daughters, and it was her duty to have acted in conformity with his wishes, or resigned her place. She may be, and I have no doubt is, a very lovable sort of person, but she is weak-minded, and although it has been my painful experience to find that you care very little for my opinion, I must warn you that such a person is no safe guide for one of your temperament."

"Oh! auntie," said Harry, with tears in her eyes, "do not talk so! I do value your opinion, indeed I do! I love

you a thousand times better than I do Mrs. Porter, or any one else; you ought not to break my heart."

"Do not talk to me about breaking your heart, Harry; you have disappointed me continually."

"How could I help it? I hated Mr. Middleton, and I could not love Mr. Brittain — Mr. Balmerton, I mean, you know I could not."

"You did not try."

"Oh! auntie; loving does not come by trying. We can keep from hating, and we can forgive by trying, but we cannot love. And Mrs. Porter says herself she was wrong, and desires your forgiveness, and, Aunt Eleanor, you know we all need forgiveness for something or other."

"I can forgive Mrs. Porter very easily for her concern in this foolish affair, but for prejudicing you against me I never, never will," said Mrs. Fanning, pushing Harry from her, and walking about the room in agitation which she seemed to strive to subdue.

"Oh! dearest auntie!" cried Harry, catching her hands, "Mrs. Porter never has said a word to your disparagement; I would have died before I would have listened to her. I learned the history of Agnes Wallace quite accidentally, not from her, but from Grace Innabee, for Mrs. Porter would never tell me. Aunt Eleanor do not judge her hardly, because she does not judge you hardly."

"Harry, you are making a mountain of a mole-hill," said Mrs. Fanning, recovering herself. "I cannot change my opinion of Mrs. Porter, it is impossible; but the fact that I permit you to continue your visits there is proof sufficient that I retain no anger against any of them. Nevertheless it would ease my mind to know that there is no probability of your meeting Mr. Thorne."

"Not the slightest," said Harry; "he has gone on a voyage to China."

"That is no small relief to me, for, though you will not marry to please me, I still hope you will not marry to displease me."

Harry wondered at herself for wondering if her aunt would approve of Mr. Brittain.

"I could not marry any one I did not love, you know," said she.

"Ah! child, that sentiment has been in the way of many a fine match."

"Did not you marry for love?" said Harry, in some surprise.

Mrs. Fanning was silent.

"Did not you love Uncle John?" persisted she.

"Harry!" said her aunt, "if you loved some one who did not love you, what would you do?"

"Oh! I do not know," said Harry, covering her face with her hands; "the most dreadful thing I can think of is marrying without love."

"You silly child!" said her aunt, "I married your uncle and I have never seen cause to repent it. Would you have had me live a sentimental old maid?"

"Oh! but Aunt Eleanor, you love him now?"

"To be sure, child! I made a sensible choice, which proves the truth of what I say, that more depends on that than on love."

"Do not you think you would have been happy with him you first loved?"

"Child, do not ask me," said Mrs. Fanning, impatiently.

"I will never marry unless I love," said Harry, emphatically, "never!"

"I hope all this bears no reference to Mr. Thorne," said her aunt, suddenly.

"No indeed, no indeed," said Harry, with great earnestness. "I assure you, Aunt Eleanor, I never cared for him in the least. Before I could love a man I must respect him first."

Mrs. Fanning was somewhat comforted, though very much surprised by this sentiment; she had not given Harry credit for so much sound sense. She sat silent; perhaps her hopes of a brilliant match for Harry were beginning to revive. But Harry supposed her thoughts were dwelling on what might have been. Much as she longed to know she dared not ask the name of him her aunt had spoken of. This evening's revelation had been a severe blow to her; she loved her aunt deeply, she admired her exceedingly, and though she often ran counter to her wishes and opinions, she had never before felt her faith in Mrs. Fanning's excellence shaken. She had been sure, hitherto, that there were circumstances to excuse Agnes Wallace's sad story, but now she felt that her aunt was doubly to blame, since she caused another to suffer what she had suffered herself.

"I shall never know," thought Harry; "and what good

would it do me if I did know? It seems as if there were a doom upon our house, and I may have to share it too."

The subject was never again alluded to between them, but some years after, when it became Harry's task to arrange her aunt's papers after her death, she came across a little folded paper containing a little curl of brown hair with the name "Charles Fanning," and she remembered with a thrill of pain the fervency with which her aunt had said, the first time she saw her,

"Harry, how much you are like your Uncle Charles!"

Harry had long ceased to fear the "doom of her house," when she found that paper; but she shed more tears over that little brown curl than over any other memento of her aunt.

The day for Marcia's wedding was appointed, and Harry believed her daily presence at Four-Oaks to be quite indispensable. She and Marcia held long consultations in the little sitting-room over the porch, copied elaborate patterns in embroidery, and sent off numerous bundles of work to Amy Bayne. Often the visit was prolonged so late into the evening that she was persuaded to stay to tea, and Marcia and Mr. Kennett walked home with her in the starlight. It happened on one of these occasions that, as they sat around the study-table after tea, Mr. Fletcher reading, Mrs. Porter knitting, Marcia, Harry, and Mr. Kennett amusing themselves with the cabinet of shells, Michael Strout ushered Mr. Brittain into the room. Harry started up, turned first red and then pale, and felt that she must appear very silly; but fortunately no one noticed her, so busy were they all in welcoming Mr. Brittain; and by the time he came to shake hands with her she had conquered her agitation and was quite vexed with herself for feeling piqued at his calmness. But Mr. Brittain had the advantage of her; he had expected to meet her there, and therefore was not taken by surprise as she was. But he did not address himself to her at all, though he had a great deal to say to the others.

"Did you get my letter?" said Mr. Kennett.

"Yes," said Mr. Brittain, "and I answered it."

"No, you did not," said Mr. Kennett; "you wrote me a letter, but you did not answer mine."

Mr. Brittain smiled. "I will answer it," he said, "tomorrow; that is, if you do not try to force me to answer it to-night."

Mr. Fletcher began to arrange the shells in their cases, and to replace them in their appropriate nook in the drawer of the desk, while Mr. Kennett was bantering his friend. The opening and shutting of the drawers in brisk succession by Mr. Fletcher, and the repeated exclamation in an undertone of, "Where is it? where is it?" checked their conversation.

"What is the matter, sir?" said Mr. Kennett. "Have you lost a shell?"

"No, no, a book, a valuable book. It cannot be lost, it is mislaid. I had it — when *did* I have it last?"

They all began to look about from mere sympathy, without exactly knowing what they were seeking.

"What sort of book is it?" asked Mr. Brittain.

"A small book in manuscript bound in red leather, with oak leaves and acorns stamped on the back."

Harry started as if she had been struck. "*That* book! *that* book!" she cried. "Oh! then I have found the key! why did I not guess it before? She hated mignonette, for she threw them away; no, I threw them away; the flowers I mean, that I offered her; because there was mignonette among them; and you are so fond of it. And that poppy-crowned head which has puzzled me so often, it is hers, I know. Why could I never see the likeness before? And the wreath of oak leaves" —

"What do you know about it?" said Mr. Fletcher, angrily.

"Ah! I know all about it." She rose and laid her hand on the arm of his high-backed, carven chair, and with infinite tenderness in voice and look, said,

"*She* has it."

"You dared to take that book out of this house?" said Mr. Fletcher, in a tone which made every one quail except Harry.

"Ah, no!" she said, "I brought it here with me; it was mine before I ever saw you. I found it among my mother's books in a closet at home."

"Impossible!" said Mr. Fletcher; "the book has never been out of my possession."

Harry looked from one to the other of the astonished group with an expression of great bewilderment.

"A little red book with oak leaves and acorns on the back," she said slowly.

"Yes," said Mr. Fletcher.

"And full of pictures and writing?"

"Yes! yes!" said Mr. Fletcher.

"And a pocket inside with letters?"

"Yes; where is it?"

"Ah!" said Harry, kneeling beside his chair, "forgive me; I have read it, but I thought it was my father's. I found it in the closet of my mother's room, and she, 'Esterha,' has it now."

"Child!" said Mr. Fletcher, pushing her away, yet not angrily, "how came she by it?"

"I carried it to her; I thought my father had loved her — no matter what I thought, it was all wrong. But she has it. She would not tell me anything about it. Oh! to think, after long years, you are both again so near and will not meet. Ah! go to her, repair for her, and for yourself, the sorrows and the regret of so many years. Time has not made her ugly, nor soured her heart. Go to her; the affection which breathes in that little book will awake again; why should you both have been spared to live at last so near each other, if not to renew the love of your youth? Go to her; a kind Providence has brought you near her again."

All this was a perfect enigma to the others. Harry's earnestness and Mr. Fletcher's evident excitement held them spell-bound; no one uttered a word when she paused.

"Will you not go to her?" said she again.

"You do not know what you ask," said he, turning away; "a dream that is fled who can recall? I am no longer young, nor is she. We are both changed, and if each has cherished a tender memory of that dream of our youth, each has cherished it apart, separated by mountains and seas and times, and the heart that has fed so long on a dream will shrink with a shock from the drear fulfilment which comes so late."

"Ah! me," said Harry, "why should it be so? why then did you keep that book?"

"I cannot tell," said he. "We all cling to some memento, to some symbol, when the reality is fled." He rose and walked about the room, but presently, turning abruptly to Harry, he asked,

"How long have you had that book?"



"It is about a year since I found it; but I do not know how long it had been in that closet."

"How came it there?"

"I do not know; did you not give it to my father?"

"I tell you it has never been out of my possession."

"But," persisted Harry, "I found it at home, before I ever saw or heard of you."

"It is strange," said Mr. Fletcher. "Can it be the same book?"

"Miss Vane," said Mr. Brittain, suddenly, "do you not recollect the day you were at Bennet's Pool? Do you not remember the satchel Phebe brought home?"

"Yes! yes! it must be!" said Harry. "I will go home instantly and inquire."

"I wish you would," said Mr. Fletcher.

Mr. Brittain rose, and Harry paused in sudden embarrassment. She did not wish to walk in the Confessional again with him.

"Mr. Kennett," she said, "you and Marcia come too?"

"Excuse me," said Mr. Kennett, "I am disposed to be the most obliging person in the world, to you, Miss Harry, but I am afraid — of Sylvio," he added in a whisper; "you have no idea what a lecture he read me about 'Alice Munsey.'"

"Some people" — began Harry, angrily.

"I am at your service, Miss Vane," said Mr. Brittain, who had been talking to Mr. Fletcher, and had not heard Mr. Kennett.

"Let us go down the North Lane; it is nearer," said she.

"As you like," he answered quietly; and they went through the garden gate into the lane, Mr. Brittain calm and polite, Harry in a tumult of indescribable feelings, partly vexation with Mr. Kennett, partly, she could not disguise from herself, disappointment to find her companion so self-possessed. When, however, she thought of the discovery she had made that night, she forgot her own feelings completely.

"Mr. Brittain," she said, "is it not strange that that book should have come into my possession? Do you know that until you spoke I was almost foolish enough to believe that the ghost had sent it to me?"

"And do you know," said Mr. Brittain, "that I am very

curious to know whom you were urging Mr. Fletcher to go to see? Could you tell me?"

"Miss Theresa," said Harry.

"Why!" exclaimed Mr. Brittain, "I wonder my mother never told me anything of that!"

"What is your mother's name?" Harry asked eagerly.

"Regina."

"Then that letter was from her! Oh! if I had only known it before, how much distress it would have saved me! You do not know how much distress that book cost me. I thought it was my father's, and I could not bear to think he loved any one better than my mother, or that my mother had supplanted some one else in his heart. It was so long before I knew the book referred to Miss Theresa, and I found it out in so strange a way. I found it out that day after — after you were wounded. I had asked Richard to get that miniature for me, and he did, but Miss Theresa claimed it, and she would not give it up; and then that bracelet — oh! I forgot! Miss Edna asked me not to tell; but what matter, now? Every one may know it now, for they will be married."

Mr. Brittain laughed.

"Why do you laugh?" said she, a little petulantly, "if they love each other?"

"Ah! Miss Vane," he said, "match-making is a dangerous business."

"But if they love each other?" persisted Harry.

"Time works great changes," said Mr. Brittain; "they love each other as they once knew each other."

"Hush! hush!" cried Harry, clapping her hands to her ears; "let me think that they will renew the dream of their youth!"

They were at the little gate which led through the orchard of Fanning House. "And you," said Mr. Brittain, laying his hand on the gate, "you, who feel so for others, do you never dream for yourself?"

"Sometimes — yes," said Harry, laughing a little, "but just now I am so much interested in Miss Theresa. Will you not ask your mother to make it all up between them?"

"Miss Harry, I cannot do that."

"Why?"

"I think it is best to let such things take their own course."

"What harm can there be in making two people happy?"

"You cannot be sure that it would make them happy."

"You are such a skeptic! — you have no feeling," said Harry, indignantly.

"Do not say that."

"Well! you have never read the book."

"No, that is true," he replied; "but you might repent if you interfered."

"But if I interfered for good?"

"You cannot tell."

"How cowardly you are!"

"For others, not for myself," he answered gravely.

Harry had no more to say, and they walked on to the house in silence; but at parting Mr. Brittain took her hand and said,

"At least I would not have you do anything which would cause you one moment's regret."

"Well!" said Harry, slowly, "I will let it alone."

"Good night."

"I wonder if he loves me still, she thought, as he turned to go down the steps. "Phebe, where is my aunt?"

"She's gone to bed wid a headache."

"Where is Uncle Fanning?"

"He aint come yet."

"Well, you come right up stairs; I want you about something very particular."

"Laws! Miss Harry," said Phebe, rubbing her eyes, "you allers comes home so late, and you has so many projics."

"Oh! you cross old Phebe! be good-natured for once; I can't stand here talking at Aunt Eleanor's door. I want to ask you about a book."

"Lor'! Miss Harry, what I know about books?" said Phebe, following her up the stairs.

"When you brought my clothes home that day I was caught in the rain at the Springs, did you find a book in the satchel?"

"Yes'm, I seed one a'long o' the clo's."

"What did you do with it?"

"A little red book, warn' it? I put it in your er — er — I dunno what I done with it 'dout I put it in your hat-box."

"But what did you do with it after I came home?"

"Lor'! Miss Harry, I 'clare I dunno, 'dout 'twas throwed in one o' dem closet drawers, 'long o' all your odds an' eens. Haint you had it?"

"Yes!" said Harry; "that will do. Dear me! what a headache I have. Oh! I hope they may get married."

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## CHAPTER XXXIV.

LONG AGO.



HE evening was warm, and yet Mrs. Brittain preferred sitting at her table within, to holding her hands on the porch. She was alone, and in fancy she lived over again the time when Sylvo was a little schoolboy; but her thoughts dwelt not so much upon his early days, as upon a friendship she had then formed, and which had never known a change. Davy's accidental mention of the book and picture which Miss Theresa had taken away from Harry, had recalled those old days so vividly that she seemed to have lived in them ever since. She knew that a book and a picture had once played a conspicuous part in her friend's history, and she could not doubt but that these were the same; but how came they into Harry's possession? Often as she had seen Miss Theresa since Davy's visit she had heard nothing from her on the subject, and she was unwilling to question her.

Her reverie was interrupted by her son, who came in as the old-fashioned clock was striking eleven.

"Why! I had no idea it was so late!" said she. "Where have you been?"

"At Four-Oaks," he said, and smiled. "Or, rather I should say, in the past; I have witnessed this night so strange a scene."

"What?" said his mother. "And I, too have been thinking of times past; times which had much to do with Four-Oaks."

"It is a strange coincidence," said Mr. Brittain, "I would like to know if your thoughts had anything to do with Miss Theresa, and a certain little red book and a miniature without a face?"

"What do you know about them?" said his mother. "Who told you about them? What put Theresa into your head? Has Mr. Fletcher been telling about it? Does he — will he go to see her?"

"I know nothing about it from him," Mr. Brittain replied; "but do you not remember the book and the picture little Davy Poinsett said Miss Theresa had taken from Miss Vane? Of the book I know nothing, but the miniature has had a curious fate. Mr. Thorne gave it to Miss Vane, who lost it on the cars last summer going to Myrtle Springs, and I found it."

"You found it! Why did you never show it to me, Sylvio?"

"I do not know why I never did," said Mr. Brittain, a little uncomfortably, "it never occurred to me to do so. I soon discovered that it was Miss Vane's, and I believe she returned it to Mr. Thorne. Not long ago she asked me, that is, I mean she asked Richard Poinsett to get it back. It seems she had found a book in a closet at Fanning House which contained an account of that miniature, and she supposed it was her father's. To night Mr. Fletcher missed the book for the first time, and Harry alone seemed to be in the secret of his early life; yet all she knows she learned from that little book which must have come into her possession the day she was caught in the rain at Myrtle Springs, for Miss Fletcher lent her a satchel to take her wet clothes in."

"And Miss Vane was at Four-Oaks?" said Mrs. Brittain, moodily.

"Yes," said her son; "and now I have told you all I know, I want you to tell me all I do not know; make this whole history clear to me."

"It is an old, old story," said his mother; "it must be more than twenty years ago that it all happened."

"Well, begin at the beginning," said her son, "and let me hear it all."

"I hardly know where to begin without telling you a great many things you know already. Let me see, — you remember when Theresa used to live with me?"

"Yes, but I do not remember how she came to be living with you."

“ It was just after your father died, and I had nobody in the world to look to, for my brother Lewis was in China, and I felt that I was obliged to do something to keep things together until you could take care of yourself. Sylvo, those Hoffmans were mean people, — if they had not cheated your father we would have been left better off when he died. But that is not to the purpose: we were left badly provided for, and I was advised to take students to board. The College had just been opened here then, but I could not make up my mind to take boys, I was so little used to them, and I did not know but that they might do you harm. I hesitated and hesitated, and at last Mrs. Marshall began to take them, and she was fitted for it, and I was not, so I was not sorry to be shut out from it. Still I knew I must do something, and I wished with all my heart there had been a girl’s school, for I would have been glad to take girls. However, fortune seemed to favor me, for after a while there came a Madame Duchène who professed to teach a little of everything in the way of accomplishments — painting and drawing, and embroidery and music; and everybody sent their daughters for her to finish off. I think she was a humbug, myself, I always did think so; but then I thought too, if some of her scholars could be induced to board with me I would like it very well, and when I made it known my friends exerted themselves in my behalf. Madame Duchène puffed her accomplishments so much that she had many scholars from a distance and I had several boarders, and among them was Theresa Hamilton. The Hamiltons and the Poinsetts lived in the next county but one to this, and I had never seen any of them, but I took a fancy to her from the first day she came. She was about nineteen then, and very pretty, — any one could tell that from her looks now. But she was better than pretty, she was gentle, and loving, and lady-like.

“ The same summer that Theresa first came to stay with me old Mr. Anthony Fletcher had two visitors, his nephew, this Mr. Fletcher now living at Four-Oaks, and a friend of his, Mr. Vane, the father of this Miss Vane, I was near saying *your* Miss Vane. Never before had ‘old Anthony,’ as they called him, been known to have any of his relations to visit him. He was said to be a self-willed, crabbed old man, and very few about here had anything to do with him. But, strange to say, two of the very prettiest girls in town

made a sort of pet of him, Harriet Fanning and Harriet Marston. They were both very pretty, but very different, and you can easily judge what they were like, for each has left a daughter—Miss Vane is not more remarkably like her mother than is Miss Fletcher like Harriet Marston.”

“What!” said Mr. Brittain, “she was her mother then?”

“Do you remember her?” asked his mother.

“No, but I have heard her name often, I have heard Mrs. Marshall speak of her, and I once heard her say that Miss Fletcher resembled her.”

“Yes, she is like her in features, but I hope for your friend’s sake she does not resemble her in character, for Harriet Marston was a girl I could not like, and for all their daughters are such friends she and Harriet Fanning could never get on peaceably together. Miss Fanning took a fancy to visit old Mr. Fletcher, and cheer him up long before his nephew was ever heard of in these parts, and people said she wanted the old man’s money, but just as soon as his nephew came they said she wanted the nephew. You see those Fannings were great at match-making, and when people get such a reputation they must expect to get credit for it. Be that as it may, Harriet Fanning was certainly very kind to the old gentleman, and he grew very fond of her. She used to play backgammon with him, and take a great interest in his garden, and such baskets of flowers and fruit as he used to send her! People had not begun to pay much attention to gardens and orchards here at that time, and a great deal was said about the wonderful productions of Four-Oaks, for there were four oaks then where there are but three now. Well, when these great baskets of rare flowers and fruit kept going to Fanning House, the Hoffmans grew very jealous of the attention shown to Harriet Fanning. I do not know if you can remember the Hoffmans; they used to live in the house where Mrs. Winstanley now lives, and they were very stuck-up people, very rich, and very exclusive, and not over and above honest in my private opinion, for they certainly wronged your father. There was a mortal rivalry between them and the Fannings. They moved away from here before John Fanning brought his wife here to live, for which I have always been sorry, for though I don’t like Mrs. Fanning I should have liked to have seen her put those Hoffmans down, and she could have done it.

“ Harriet Marston was a cousin of the Hoffmans, and there was always a race between her and the Fanning girls, which should have the most attention. As to Harriet Fanning, to do her justice, I don't believe she ever felt a particle of envy of the girls, although she had more finery and jewels than all the Fannings put together, and consequently more attention. But Miss Marston envied the fruit and flowers showered upon Harriet Fanning by one old man, and she determined to come in for a share. She took to going to Four-Oaks and playing games, and working in the garden with the old man, and I suppose he was flattered, for he soon came to like her too, though he liked Harriet Fanning better. When his nephew came he tried to make a match, so it is said, between him and Miss Fanning, but neither took a fancy to the other. Mr. Fletcher, the nephew, was raised, I believe, in Virginia, though born in England, and whether at College, or where, I don't know, he formed a friendship with Mr. Vane, who was in bad health, and brought him to Four-Oaks. Old Mr. Fletcher was a dabbler in all manner of things, and he introduced here the homœopathic system of medicine, and a good many people applied to him. It was a new thing then, and a great thing, and Mr. Vane let him practise on him. People said that Harriet Fanning practised on him too; any way, they fell in love with each other, and when the Fannings found out that he was rich and of a good family they were fit to eat him up. Yet, for all that, she insisted upon running away to get married instead of being married at home. But this is ahead of my story.

“ Young Mr. Fletcher did not fall in love with Harriet Fanning, any more than she would with him. He fell in love with Theresa, who to my fancy was a great deal prettier than Harriet Fanning or Harriet Marston either. I do not know what sort of a man he is now, but then he was a very pleasant gentleman, and I did not wonder that Theresa should like him.

“ The first time he ever saw her was under that tree which is now cut down: it stood a little apart from the others. Madame Duchène, who you must know was trying to catch old Mr. Fletcher, had obtained his permission to bring her pupils up to sketch the house, and Theresa was among them. She did not know that there were any young gentlemen there, for it was only the day after their arrival.



Madame Duchène had placed her pupils, some five or six, at different points, and Theresa was seated under that oak, As she was trying to convey the house to paper, young Fletcher came out of the front door and walked straight up to her. He had been watching her from the window, and, according to his own account, fell in love with her then. He was a wonderful draughtsman himself, better than the Madame by far. He introduced himself, took her paper and pencils, sketched the house in a very short time, and begged permission to take a sketch of herself, promising to give it to her when finished. She consented, but when he looked at her with the steadiness which I suppose the portrait-painter finds necessary, she put up her hands and covered her face. He drew the picture in that attitude, and as he handed it to her he laughed and said it was as well, for he never could draw a face. He had drawn a wreath of oak leaves around her head as he idled with his pencil. Theresa brought it home and showed it to me. She was as simple as a child and very confiding, and it was impossible not to love her. She used to stay with me when the other girls would go off to walk, and I grew very fond of her, and though she was nearly a dozen years younger than myself it pleased me well, the thought that she might marry Mr. Fletcher's heir, as everybody knew he considered his nephew, and live at Four-Oaks. It seemed to me a very good thing for all parties, so I made no objection when Mr. Fletcher came every day, ostensibly to see how Theresa was progressing with her drawing. In the course of time he accomplished a miniature, the very miniature you described. He did not give that to Theresa, he kept it himself, but he gave her a bracelet made to represent oak-leaves. Someway acorns and oak-leaves entered as a sort of symbol into everything they did.

"However, old Mr. Fletcher took no pleasure in his nephew's visits to Theresa, nor did Harriet Marston; she had made up her mind to be Mrs. Owen Fletcher, and she succeeded. Mr. Fletcher, the younger, could not bear her, and yet you see he married her. I believe, though, there was some good in the woman, I think she really loved Mr. Fletcher; but that is poor excuse for acting as she did. The worst thing I ever saw her do was pretending to take a great fancy to Theresa, and I have always thought that old Mr. Fletcher might have overcome his objections, or

might never have had any, if it had not been for her. Harriet Fanning was about this time so much taken up with Mr. Vane that though she did not forget nor neglect her old friend she was not at Four-Oaks as much as she used to be ; but Miss Marston was indefatigable in her attentions. She had managed, as the saying is, to get her finger in the old man's eye, but poor old fellow, he could not make his two Harriets get on well together. And for that one thing I always liked Harriet Fanning. She came here one day, it was just before she left for the summer, and spoke her mind pretty freely about Miss Marston. 'And now, Theresa,' she said, 'don't you give way before her, not an inch ; she has no business with you, and don't you let her throw dust in your pretty eyes.' They were the last words I ever heard Harriet Fanning speak.

" Things went on in a secret sort of way for some time between Theresa and Mr. Fletcher. Theresa was an orphan, and her brothers wanted her to marry this very George Dunbar, who had addressed her, and Mr. Fletcher's uncle wanted him to marry Miss Marston, so they decided for the present to keep their engagement a secret. I remember Theresa coming up to my room and saying she did not believe it would ever come to pass, meaning her marriage with Mr. Fletcher ; and since then she has often said she was glad nobody ever knew it but ourselves.

" Well, time went on, and Mr. Vane was advised to go to Madeira for his health, and Mr. Owen Fletcher went with him : I never understood, exactly, why he went. Theresa told me that he had another Uncle Fletcher there, a wine-merchant, and that Mr. Anthony Fletcher wanted him to visit him. I always suspected that the old gentleman was trying to break it up between his nephew and Theresa, but she had no such suspicion. Harriet Marston by this time had brought young Mr. Fletcher to regard her with a very friendly feeling, and I know that when he went to Madeira Theresa was not the only young lady who corresponded with him. Soon after he left, the Hoffmans moved away from here, and I never saw nor heard anything more of Harriet Marston for a long time ; but from what Theresa wrote me of her own affairs I could see that somebody was working on Mr. Fletcher in Madeira. Theresa had gone home even before Mr. Fletcher left, and he saw a great deal too much of Harriet Marston, I thought, the last few days he remained.

“ However, they, that is Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Vane, had been gone nearly a year when Theresa came to pay me a visit. We were sitting in this very room one evening, when who should come in but Mr. Owen Fletcher. He had reached Netherford that very day. Mr. Vane had gone up to Fanning House, and he had come to learn of me something about Theresa. He had not expected to find her with me, and he seemed so glad to see her that I thought there was never a bit of danger that Harriet Marston could supplant her.

“ Everybody was now expecting a magnificent wedding to take place at Fanning House, when just the day before the one appointed, people were astonished to hear that Harriet had run away with Mr. Vane. It suited them I suppose, better than a more formal affair, and her family very soon forgave her. A few days after, Theresa told me that she had known it for a week, that Harriet had told her, and that Mr. Fletcher, despairing of his uncle’s consent, had tried to persuade her to run away too. Perhaps she might have done so, but she said she had a terror of entering a family where she was unwelcome.

“ Theresa had a book, a little red book, the very same, I dare say, of which you speak ; it was a journal which Mr. Fletcher kept in the island of Madeira. She used to pore over it all day, until I grew sick of the sight of it, for it always made her sad.

“ At this time old Mr. Fletcher was unable to leave his room. He had been failing in health for some months, and it was evident he could not live long. I hoped from day to day that he would ask to see Theresa, but he never did, until the evening before he died. I had been out, and when I came home Theresa met me at the door. She was as pale as a ghost — I remember it as though it were but yesterday. ‘ Regina,’ she said — she always called me so from the first day she learned my name, because she said she liked the sound — ‘ Regina, it is all over, I shall never see him again,’ and then she began to cry. I told her it was all nonsense, that it was nothing but a lover’s quarrel ; but she said no, that old Mr. Fletcher was dying, that he had sent for her, and when she went she had found no one there but Mr. Owen Fletcher and Amy Bayne. Somehow my heart misgave me as soon as she mentioned Amy’s name. I like Amy, I think she is a dutiful good girl, but at that

time she was entirely too much under Miss Marston's thumb. But Nick Bayne was the gardener at Four-Oaks, and so, perhaps, it was not to be wondered at that she was there.

"Theresa never could tell me all the particulars of her visit, but managed to make me understand that old Mr. Fletcher had exacted a death-bed promise from her that she would not marry his nephew. He told her that it would ruin his prospects, for he was too poor to marry one who had no wealth. Young Mr. Fletcher followed her down stairs and begged her to retract, but she would not, and then in his anger he vowed he never would see her again. It was a great pity he was so hasty, for Anthony Fletcher had no right to exact any such promise, I do think, and Theresa might have been reasoned out of her scrupulousness about keeping it, if he had given her time to get over the scene with his uncle.

"That night old Mr. Fletcher died, and his nephew came into possession of Four-Oaks. They say the breath was hardly out of the old man's body when his nephew went down and cut away at the old oak under which he first saw Theresa. He could not manage it alone, and he called all the men on the place, and when the sun rose nothing remained of it but a stump, the very limbs were cut to pieces. He stayed until after his uncle's funeral, and then went away and was never seen here again until last year. I do not believe he has ever met Theresa yet, and I know he had been here some months before he knew she was here.

"Theresa asked me to return his letters and ask for hers. The little red book and all passed through my hands; but in a note to me he said he could not find the miniature, and I suppose he wanted to keep it. When I saw that Theresa took it so much to heart I mustered the courage to write and tell him to come back; I did so without her knowledge, but I've always been sorry that I did, for it met with no answer, and after a while I heard he had married Harriet Marston."

"But she was Mrs. Thorne," said Mr. Brittain, the mother of this Mr. Thorne who was here."

"No," said his mother, "is it possible? I never heard that before."

"Yes, Ralph wrote me a long letter, and told me all about it."

“That accounts, then, for Mr. Thorne’s having the miniature — but how came Harriet Marston by it, unless she bribed Amy Bayne to get it?”

“Ah!” said Mr. Brittain, “that I know nothing about.”

“It was always incomprehensible to me how your great friend could engage himself to a girl who seemed to have so great a fancy for some one else, as wild a somebody too as that Mr. Thorne, but if he was her brother all I have to say is that it is a pity Mr. Fletcher should have made such a mystery about it. But I don’t understand how Harriet Marston could have been a widow before she married Mr. Fletcher; she must have been a widow a very short time, and she must have married Mr. Thorne soon after she left here. She went away from here about the time Mr. Fletcher went to Madeira: he was gone nearly a year, and a little more than a year after he came back I heard he had married Harriet Marston.”

“Ralph wrote me all about it,” said Mr. Brittain; “that is all about Mrs. Thorne, he said nothing about Harriet Marston. He said she had married this old Mr. Thorne who was wealthy, in compliance with the wishes of her friends. Mr. Thorne, *our* Mr. Thorne I mean, told Ralph that his mother had two children, but he stated it thus in the haste of writing, I suppose, for Mr. Fletcher, or Miss Fletcher told him that Mrs. Thorne had but one child, a son; but Mr. Thorne had a daughter who always stayed with her step-mother, even after she married again. She is living now, I have forgotten where. Miss Fletcher told Ralph that there was an old attachment between her mother and father, before her mother married Mr. Thorne. Her husband had been dead not more than a year when she married Mr. Fletcher.”

“They can’t make me believe that Mr. Fletcher loved her,” said Mrs. Brittain; “it was all managing on her part. I would not be surprised if he loves Theresa still.”

Mr. Brittain laughed, and his mother began to knit desperately.

“That is what Harry Vane thinks,” said he, after a short silence.

“What has she to do with it?” said his mother.

“She first discovered it.”

“Sylvo, you must not tell Miss Vane about this; you must not.”

"Where is the harm?"

"How do you know but what she would spread it all over town?"

"Never in the world! Mother, you do not know her."

Something in the tone of his voice caused his mother to look up.

"Sylvo!" she cried quickly, "what is Miss Vane to you? Do you love her? tell me truly; do not keep it from me!"

"I do love her," he answered.

Mrs. Brittain groaned, — she could not help it.

"I knew it! I always said she meant to have you."

"No, mother," he said, "I told her, and she would not listen — I asked her and she refused."

"Refused!" cried his mother, starting up. "Refused you? What could she see in you to refuse?"

"She said she did not love me."

"I don't see what she could object to in you," said Mrs. Brittain with great indignation, "the Brittaines are as good as the Fannings any day. She might be very thankful to get you."

Mr. Brittain could not repress a smile as he thought what she might have said if he had told her Miss Vane had accepted him. To his mother's excited fancy his smile seemed the result of some bitter feeling.

"Oh, my son!" she cried, stretching out her arms, "my noble, gifted son! — never mind it. Your poor old mother will always love and appreciate you. That she should have scorned such a heart as this."

"Mother you mistake," he said, "she did not scorn it. Nothing could have been more flattering than the manner of her refusal."

"Do not mind it, Sylvo, don't let it make you unhappy."

"I am not unhappy," he answered.

"Pride supports him," thought his mother, and she went to bed under the impression that Miss Vane had refused her son that night. Anger, mortification, relief, and surprise kept her awake until dawn, and even in her restless sleep she was haunted by the fear that Sylvo would risk another rebuff. She awoke unrefreshed, wishing it were in her power to prevent his seeing her again.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

## REGRETS.



**M**R. BRITTAIN'S love for Harry had been haunted by a doubt, which, try as he might, he had never been able entirely to dispel; but the revelations of the past night had removed every lingering suspicion. Excessively romantic as was her interest in the affairs of Mr. Fletcher and Miss Theresa, he yet honored her for a sentiment so entirely unselfish, an enthusiasm so sincere; he upbraided himself for the distrust he had felt of her, and he was anxious now to fill up the faint outlines of the red book's story for her by way of amendment; and still more to hear from her fuller explanations of many things which had occurred; not that this was necessary, but it would be so delightful. He had determined to acquaint Harry with Miss Theresa's history the very next day, notwithstanding his mother's prohibition, and Harry herself cherished a little half-acknowledged hope that he would come.

But events were ordered for Mrs. Brittain's satisfaction, not for theirs. At breakfast that morning a letter was handed Mr. Brittain which made it absolutely imperative that he should depart for the city immediately, and he was absent a week.

Harry still supposed him at home, and as day after day went by and he did not make his appearance at Fanning House, she grew quite disconsolate.

"What have I done?" she said to herself as she sat sewing by the west window — for Harry had taken a fancy now to be very industrious with her needle — "what have I done to drive him away? He might still be my friend. It seems to me as if I am to be deserted entirely: Aunt Elea-

nor is displeased with me and I cannot help it; and if I go to Four-Oaks I am in Marcia's and Mr. Kennett's way; and the one hope I had clung to, of finding and cherishing my father's first love, is dashed to the ground. I had so set my heart on it that I had ceased to grieve at the thought that mamma had anything to do with it. It is very strange that Mr. Brittain does not come. I did think there was more in his — his liking for me than any one's else. And Uncle John thinks so much of him too! I wonder he does not come to see Uncle John. But I'm sure I don't care if he never comes again!"

But she did care, for as the days went by and he did not come, she persuaded herself into the belief that she was a most miserable, forlorn young creature with nothing and nobody to interest herself in. Old Judy shook her head ominously, and hinted that the prettiest and nicest young ladies ought not to hold their heads too high.

"Pride," she said, "was onpleasing to the Lord, an', more'n that, it always caught a fall. Ef Miss Harry didn't mind she'd live to 'pent of the grand offers she had given the go by."

It was her belief that Miss Harry was repenting then, she was singing all day long such sorrowful ditties. And Judy saw, with regret equal to Mrs. Fanning's, that though Mr. Middleton remained in the house, it was not for love of Miss Harry.

"Bonnie Doon" had become as great a favorite with Miss Vane as with Mr. Brittain; and it happened that as she sat singing it one rainy afternoon the plaintive melody floated to his ears as he came up the box-bordered walk to the house. Mr. Fanning was smoking on the piazza, quite *ennuyed*, as Miss Edna would have said, with the dismal rain. Right glad he was to see Mr. Brittain mount the steps; a good long talk on politics, or a cosey game of chess presented themselves for his choice as he exclaimed,

"Why Sylvo! old fellow, I thought you had forgotten the way here."

"It is a dreadful day to come visiting, I know," said Mr. Brittain, "but" —

"Oh! you are doubly welcome such a dull day."

"Thank you, sir; is Miss Vane at home?"

"Oh! ho!" thought Mr. Fanning. "Yes, she is in the parlor," he said, looking very much as if he would like to ask what he wanted with Miss Vane.



The song had ceased, and Harry stood near the door nervously clasping and unclasping her hands, while she listened to their conversation.

"I am not to take the honor of this visit to myself then?" said Mr. Fanning, with a smile of peculiar satisfaction.

"I came to see her expressly," said Mr. Brittain; "I have something to tell her concerning a book in which she is very much interested."

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" said Mr. Fanning. "You'll find her in the parlor; walk in Sylvo." And Sylvo walked in, while Mr. Fanning soliloquized, "a precious clumsy fellow at an excuse! You can't throw dust in my eyes!" And away he went to tell his wife that he did believe Harry had captivated Mr. Brittain.

"It is a matter of indifference to me," said Mrs. Fanning; "Harry has had better chances and thrown them away."

"Better chances! Hum—he's worth a dozen or so of your Middletons and Balmertons, and Harry will get a prize if she gets him."

"I shall have nothing to do with it," said his wife, and Mr. Fanning was not sorry to hear it. He had never had any share in the numerous matches made in that house, and this one, he argued, Fate had decreed should be of his own arrangement, and it was but fair, since his wife had had her way about all the rest. He would never have manoeuvred for Mr. Brittain, but since it was certain Mr. Brittain of his own free will and accord chose to notice Harry, he would grant him every facility, and espouse his cause too. So he left them alone in the parlor, while Mr. Brittain told Harry the story of Miss Theresa, and Harry sat and trembled. The little red book had revealed enough for her to guess at the rest, and though she was interested in the story, she was thinking just then far more of Mr. Brittain than of what he was saying.

"Ah!" thought she, "he is so quiet and so calm! He cares about me no more! Nobody will ever love me well enough to love or hate a tree for my sake."

"And now Miss Harry," said Mr. Brittain, "I must entreat your pardon for the very rude manner in which I refused to be of assistance to you in procuring that miniature. But I hoped to make amends by telling you this romantic story, though my mother expressly forbade me to divulge it. I never disobeyed her before, and so having dared her displeasure I hope I may win your forgiveness."

"There is nothing to forgive," said Harry, mildly; "you did what you felt to be right, you know. I knew you were right all the time, though I was angry."

She was playing with a bracelet on her arm, and he thought of the night he had found that oak-leaf bauble. Perhaps at that moment he might have "risked another rebuff," as his mother would have said, but the expression of Harry's face withheld him. He had never seen her wear exactly such an expression before. "Is it possible," he thought, "that Miss Theresa's history can have overcome her so completely?"

But he was mistaken; Harry had at last begun to feel more interest in her own concerns than in those of other people. She could not sing, she could not talk, and she was glad when Mr. Brittain went away.

Mr. Fanning was glad too; he was in a fever of impatience to know what Mr. Brittain could have been talking about.

"Harry," said he, as soon as Mr. Brittain was outside of the front door, "what did he have to say?"

"I can't tell you," said Harry, blushing, but not smiling.

"Look here! my little lady, let me tell you, his match is not to be found every day, nor everywhere; do you think twice about it before you give him the mitten."

"I do not exactly want Mr. Brittain to ask me to marry him," said Harry to herself as she went up stairs, "but I would like him to like me. If I only had a brother or a sister! But I might live to be a lonesome old maid, and that would be dreadful. Oh! dear, I am a fool!"

Somewhat to Mr. Fanning's dismay Mr. Brittain never came again expressly to see Harry, though he came often that he *might* see her. A strange change seemed to have come over her. He waited long to hear from her lips the gay sallies which used to be so frequent, but he waited in vain,—they never came. The light was not quenched in her brown eyes, nor the bloom faded in her cheeks, but there was an expression of tenderness and sadness which rendered her even more beautiful than the old sparkle with which her features used to beam. She seemed to have put aside childishness and suddenly become a woman. And Mr. Brittain was surprised to find that the love he had felt for her as a bright and wayward elf was something different now. Calm as he seemed outwardly, sometimes when he

saw her in her most languid moods, the dread of losing her, the thought of death, or a more favored lover, would shake him like a tempest. Then Harry would waken suddenly from one of these dreamy trances, smile as radiantly as ever, and leave him discussing some uninteresting topic with her uncle to walk with Grace Innibee whom she disliked, or Miss Dalrymple who tired her to death, or, worse still for poor Mr. Brittain, with some spruce young beau. The dread of appearing to desire his notice made her cause him many a heartache by the systematic manner in which she seemed to avoid him.

"It was very kind of him to come and tell me about Miss Theresa, but he only wanted to keep me from making a goose of myself, and I am much obliged to him. It was only a passing fancy he had for me; if it had been more than that why should he be so cool, why should he not tremble a little at sight of me, and look pale and melancholy? No! I cannot inspire a love like that." And tormenting herself with these thoughts it came to pass that the change in Miss Vane was visible to all eyes. People whispered, "What is the matter?" and hazarded various conjectures.

Harry was nineteen years and some months old, but in anticipation of the state of single-blessedness to which she believed herself to be doomed, she now tried to make for herself an interest in the animal kingdom. She took a dog to be her sole faithful friend, but in less than a week she discovered that it was all a mistake about dogs having so much sagacity. She petted a kitten, but the kitten caught the young chickens instead of mice. She had a squirrel, but the squirrel bit her finger, and at last she determined to ask for Janet's parrot. She remembered to have heard Mrs. Porter say that Mr. Fletcher could not bear the sight of it. Away she sped, therefore, to Four-Oaks one golden afternoon of October.

Marcia had just received some articles of wedding finery, but Harry was then too full of the parrot to pay much attention to them.

"Marcia," said she, after she had carelessly examined a box of handkerchiefs, "I have come this afternoon to beg you to let me have Janet's parrot, if you are willing to part with it. You know I was very fond of Janet."

"I am very sorry, Harry," said Marcia, "but you know

papa disliked to have it here so much that Mr. Kennett took it to his aunt."

"Oh! but he did not give it to her, did he?" said Harry. "I should like so much to have it."

"Mrs. Marshall would probably let you have it."

"There is Mr. Kennett now," said Harry, as she caught a glimpse of him through the trees; "I shall go right down and meet him;" and she ran down stairs just as he came in the door.

"Mr. Kennett!"

"Miss Harry?"

"Don't you think Mrs. Marshall would let me have Janet's parrot?"

"Mrs. Marshall does not own Janet's parrot."

"Well you then, can't you let me have it?"

"Alas! Miss Harry, it is not in my possession either."

"It is not dead, is it!" said Harry.

"No, I believe it is in a very flourishing condition."

"But who has it?"

"Somebody who will *never* give it up," said Mr. Kennett, with tragic emphasis.

"Oh! don't be so mysterious! Tell me who has it?" said Harry, impatiently.

"Will you promise me that you won't try to get it back?"

"No, I will not," said Harry, "because I mean to have it if I can."

"Miss Harry, that bird's conversation is such a solace to its present owner it would be cruelty to deprive him of it."

"I do not feel like joking about it," said Harry. "I am in earnest, I want the bird."

"I am very sorry I did not know it two weeks ago, but I have parted with it to a certain friend of mine."

"You mean Mr. Brittain?" said Harry, quickly.

"Well, you see Miss Harry, I am going to be married, and new ties will break up old ones in a great measure, and as Sylvo won't get him a wife I gave him the bird to keep him company."

"You had no business to do it," said Harry, quite vexed; "what could Mr. Brittain want with it?"

"He knows," said Mr. Kennett laughing, "for he asked me for it; and perhaps you know too why he wanted it?"

"I know nothing at all about it," said Harry, trying to appear unconcerned.

"Why Miss Harry? I hope you'll repent of that — *mensongerie*, as Topsy-turvy would call it, before you die."

"You had better go up stairs and talk to Marcia. You are the most indifferent lover I ever saw!"

"I am gone!" said Mr Kennett, laughing; "but Miss Harry, don't be selfish about that bird."

Harry had not the slightest inclination to deprive Mr. Brittain of the bird; indeed her furor for pets was completely annihilated. Quite unwilling to meet any one in her present frame of mind she went home by the North Lane; and it was well she did, since she preferred solitude, for the Terrace was covered with promenaders. The corner by St. Botolf's was the favorite resting-place, and here a little knot of gossips might be found any pleasant afternoon. Alas! the shadow of the church was no protection against envious and malicious insinuations.

While Harry walked through the North Lane in a state of blissful excitement, Miss Grace Innibee was retailing the news of the day to a crowd of eager listeners at the corner by St. Botolf's.

"Oh! Mr. Brittain!" she exclaimed, as she descried that gentleman crossing over from the opposite Terrace, "come up here, you are the very person I want to see. I hear you are becoming quite a ladies' man, and I shall expect you at a sociable at our house next Wednesday. But now let me assure you all again, it is *not* a party; so do not expect any grand doings. Susan particularly, wants it understood that it is a mere sociable. There are to be so many weddings this winter that Susan vows she will not begin so early in the season with a large party."

"Weddings?" cried Miss Dalrymple. "Pray Miss Grace, you are always so well informed upon such subjects, what weddings, and how many?"

"Oh! I have heard of six or seven," said Miss Grace, "but not all in our set, however. There's Sallie Hart and Mr. Middleton to begin with. I know that for a fact, for it was told me in confidence, as I am to be one of the bride-maids."

"Why Grace! Are you not ashamed to tell it?" said Miss Jones.

"No," said Miss Grace, unblushingly, "Sallie wants it

known. Besides it is to take place very soon now. Mr. Middleton has left, you know, more than a week ago. They will come up and pass a week with us, and I am going home with them; but of course we must give them a party while they are here."

"But that is only one wedding, Grace," said Miss Selina, ravenous for news.

"Well there is Miss Fletcher and Mr. Kennett."

"Is that true?"

"Yes, it positively is true. Mr. Thorne was her brother you know, and Mr. Kennett recovered from his fit of jealousy."

"La! what will Mr. Sutton do? Miss Fletcher was his last lady-love," said Miss Jones.

"Mr. Sutton never seriously thought of her a minute!" said Miss Grace, positively.

"And there was poor Mr. Paul" — said one.

"Paul? Surely, now, you never believed that report?" said Miss Grace. "Paul admired her, of course; she is pretty, you know. He may have had the slightest possible *pension* for her, Miss Edna (Miss Grace would not waste her execrable French upon the unappreciative), but of course it amounted to nothing; indeed Paul is too prudent for that, for the old gentleman, you know, has a very small property and he is always wasting his money on articles of *virtuoso*. But did you ever see anybody so changed as Harry Vane? She was really taken with Mr. Kennett, they say, and that is why she refused so many good offers. It is a great pity, but I do believe it is a great blow to her. But just let me tell you the strangest thing of all! Pa says there used to be a liking between Miss Theresa Hamilton and Mr. Fletcher years ago, and Mr. Fletcher has been to see her. Is there anything in it Miss Edna?"

Miss Edna drew herself up very stiffly. "I am unable to give you any information upon the subject," she said.

Miss Grace turned away, shrugged her shoulders, winked at Mr. Brittain, and said,

"Well ladies, I must quit your pleasant company. I left Susan at home with the toothache; she will be expecting me, so good-night! *Au revue.*"

"I am astonished at Grace Innibee!" said Miss Edna; "she has no more sense of propriety than a baby. She had better be at home studying her French dictionary than

spreading such *on-dits*. As if she could make me believe that Paul Innibee had only a slight *penchant* for Marcia Fletcher, when everybody knows he would have given his two eyes for her. And as to Alfred Sutton, it is easy to see when a girl has refused him by the general abuse he heaps upon the whole sex ;” and drawing Blanche’s arm within her own she walked away.

The group scattered in various directions, and Miss Dalrymple was left alone with Mr Brittain. Poor fellow ! he had listened eagerly to Miss Edna, hoping to hear a refutation of the charge against Harry, and his heart sank within him as she brought her speech to a close without a word about Miss Vane.

“ I am going up to Fanning House, Mr. Brittain,” said Miss Dalrymple, “ does your path lie in that direction ? ”

“ I believe so,” he answered, and walked on mechanically.

Miss Dalrymple was so full of the intention of reporting Grace Innibee’s speech to Harry that she forgot to talk, and poor Mr. Brittain so overwhelmed with anguish and despair that he could not talk.

They found Harry talking to her aunt and uncle, and by no means looking like a broken-hearted maiden. Her eyes were bright, and a beautiful color shot up in her face as she shook hands with Mr. Brittain.

“ My dear I am so glad to see you looking so well and so cheerful,” whispered Miss Dalrymple. “ I came here expressly to warn you not to indulge in such low spirits, for people have their eyes on you.” Then branching off into a long apology for the liberty she was taking, she informed her of what Grace Innibee had said.

Harry, instead of thanking her for her kindness, became very angry, not with Miss Dalrymple, but with Miss Grace. Miss Dalrymple had imparted her communication almost in a whisper, but Harry said aloud,

“ I wish she would never mention my name ! She never can do so without impertinence ! ”

“ Sh — h ! ” said Miss Dalrymple, soothingly.

But the shadow had settled down upon Harry’s face, and was not uplifted for the rest of the evening.

“ What is the matter with you, Harry ? ” said her uncle, when Miss Dalrymple and Mr. Brittain were gone. “ How would you like to see old Dunbar ? He said he was coming

to see you ; maybe that news will put you in a good humor. But don't treat him as you did before, or I may have a duel on my hands."

"I wish Grace Innibee were a man that you might shoot her," said Harry, moodily.

"Hey dey ! what is to pay now ?"

"Nothing, only she must go and say in a crowd that I was breaking my heart for Mr. Kennett. *He* knows better ; it is not for that I care, but she had to go and say it before Mr. Brittain."

"Oh ! ho !" thought Mr. Fanning, delighted. Then he said aloud,

"Very impertinent of her ; she ought to be taken to task."

Mrs. Fanning was not present when this confidence took place between the uncle and niece, and Mr. Fanning saw no necessity for telling her.

"She'll overdo it," he thought ; "best manage it myself. Mr. Brittain is a man of sense, he will not heed what Grace Innibee has said." Then it suddenly occurred to Mr. Fanning that men in love never had any sense, and he was rather at a loss what to do. The only conclusion he could to come was, that he would not interfere until things became desperate ; it would never do to be hasty.

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### THE VISION OF REGINA.



COULD Harry have seen Mr. Brittain as he sat that night in his study, she would have been fully satisfied of the strength of the passion she had inspired. Alas ! the parrot's conversation was no longer a solace to him ; indeed, the occasional mention of Harry's affection finally became so irritating that he removed the bird to another room. The only memento he possessed of Harry was the little note she had written to



Mr. Kennett, for the apple had long ago yielded to the touch of time. Over this note he pored for hours, vainly trying to decide if it contained any proof of a warmer sentiment than friendship. Oh! why should she ever have met Ralph, or why should Ralph ever have met Marcia? It was hard to give her up, but harder still to give her up to a disappointed attachment. Even if she might love again, it was hard to think that it might be his to win only a sober second love, while the rich bloom of a first affection was despised by another! He gave to her the passionate wealth of a heart which had never felt an interest in any other, and what could he hope for in return? He understood now why Harry had been so moved when she rejected him. He had hoped hitherto, but hope was over, and he would go to Fanning House no more.

And while his mother rejoiced to see that he kept away, she grieved sorely at the change which came over him; indeed, so sorely did she grieve that she began to wish Miss Vane would marry him. "Certainly," she thought, "I like my life as it is; I am happy enough in my son without wishing for a daughter-in-law; but I am growing old—I would hate to die and leave him all alone. If he married somebody who would make him happy, I would be content. And he likes Miss Vane or he would not mope so. I am sure I do not know what she saw in him to refuse. She will come round, though, she will be sure to do it; men like Sylvo are not to be had every day."

But Mrs. Brittain had no idea of taking any steps to bring Miss Vane round. She was not formed like Mrs. Marshall to be Cupid's ambassador, she could only wait and hope, and her hopes were not seriously troubled with doubts. So while her son's castle in the air lay in ruins, her own was springing up boldly and rapidly. She saw in her vision Sylvo already married; she saw in Harry the best of daughters, and then she sighed to think that perhaps she might not make the best of wives; and so it came to pass that Miss Vane was constantly in her "mind's eye."

The time drew near for Marcia's wedding. Mrs. Marshall had been to visit the bride elect; even Mrs. Dean had yielded to her fate and called on the "brick-house girl." Not, it must be confessed, with as good a grace as Mrs. Fanning would have shown, but it would be preposterous to expect as much from Mrs. Dean.

The little red book was still in Miss Theresa's possession, but the miniature had found its way back to Four-Oaks. This Marcia whispered to Harry, but it was all either of them ever knew about it; how or why it was there, or who brought it, was never disclosed. It gave Harry, however, a thrill of delight, and she was better satisfied, perhaps, than if she had heard the full particulars; for she loved a little delicate mystery.

And the wedding feast was prepared, and at last the slow-footed hours ushered in the wedding-day. It was to be a very quiet affair of course, but all parties concerned were satisfied to have it so. Harry was allowed her own way about the decorations both of the bride and the feast, and was supremely happy, except for one thought; Mr. Brittain had not been to Fanning House since the day Grace Innibee had, as Harry expressed it, poisoned his mind against her. She knew, therefore, that Mr. Brittain must certainly believe what Grace had said. Now Harry was to be first bridesmaid and wait with Mr. Brittain, and what should she do? If she dared to show her satisfaction he would think it put on, and if she tried to conceal it he would think she was grieving.

Such people as Harry, however, never have their feelings under perfect control. When the night came, and the bride and her maidens, the groom and his attendants, the clergyman in his robes, and a few friends assembled in the parlor of Four-Oaks, and the solemn ceremony began, Harry thought no more of Mr. Brittain than if he had been an utter stranger. It was the first wedding she had ever witnessed, and, interested as she was in both bride and groom, she was almost as much excited as if it had been her own. Her fervent amen after the blessing, was enough to have made anybody smile, except Mr. Brittain.

It was not until the ceremony was over that she was able to distinguish any of the guests, but when she looked around they were so few that they might be easily enumerated. Grace Innibee was not there, for at that time she was assisting at a wedding in the city, where all the pomp and circumstance Mr. Middleton could devise, ministered to the æsthetic taste of the crowd assembled to witness that magnificent affair. But Miss Theresa was there, to Harry's intense gratification, placed between Mrs. Brittain and Mrs. Porter. Mr. Fletcher was some distance off, looking very

uncomfortable in his white kids. Beside Mr. and Mrs. Fanning there were Mr. and Mrs. Dean, of course, and Miss Dalrymple, who was animadverting upon Grace Innibee's slander, to Mrs. Fanning, greatly to Mr. Fanning's annoyance. A little apart sat good Mrs. Marshall, looking at happiness through her nephew's eyes, and finding it by no means a bitter thing. The traditional gray silk had given place to a stiff black satin, and as her old eyes brimmed up with happy tears, she wiped them away with a handkerchief so inappropriately elaborate anybody might have known a man had purchased it. The congratulations being over, Harry went to sit by her, for there is a strong attraction in sympathy. The old lady squeezed her hand until her fingers tingled.

"Miss Harry," she said, "I'm always your well-wisher, though you don't come to see me sociably; but it is my house full of students, I know; they are apt to frighten off pretty young ladies. But I'm always your well-wisher, and I hope the day is not far off when I shall see your own wedding?"

"I hope not, truly," said Mr. Kennett, who had taken his seat on the other side of his aunt. "Of course just now it would be strange, unpardonable, eh, Miss Harry? if I did not want to see everybody as happy as myself, and so I will make the good wish for Sylvo, too."

Harry blushed, but as Mr. Brittain was not close by, the blush quickly faded.

"Where is Sylvo?" continued Mr. Kennett, looking around. "Sylvo, come here."

Mr. Brittain heard his name and came forward.

"Did you know that Scandal was busy with the name of Miss Vane? Scandal, you know, is sometimes a man and sometimes a woman; and this time she proves to be a woman, and she has placed me under immense obligations for a most unmerited compliment. I am charged with the crime of breaking Miss Harry's heart! I hope it amused you as much as it did me. Why in the world I should be breaking yours, Miss Harry, while Mrs. Kennett was doing her best to break mine, Miss Grace alone could tell; we all know she is a genius. I never thought her pretty, but I am willing to admit that she had a creative fancy. Her brother is a poet, and so it is not surprising that she should have invented a romance to match my beautiful idyl of Alice

Munsey. But don't be too hard on Miss Grace; I have a fellow feeling for her. You know I can't stick to the truth myself."

"Are you not ashamed of yourself to talk so, Ralp'? — Miss Harry, don't you mind him; he is only teasing," said Mrs. Marshall. "Ralp', now you are married you ought to break yourself of that habit."

But neither Harry nor Mr. Brittain thought his teasing disagreeable this time.

"What a fool I am!" thought Mr. Brittain; "I might have known it was a slander." And the more he looked at Harry's radiant face the more he was astonished at his folly in giving credence to the story.

And now the bride-cake was cut, and the bride's health drunk, and, Mrs. Marshall, opening her great bead bag, requested her nephew to fill it with wedding-cake.

"What for?" said he, pretending great surprise.

"The boys, you know, dear; they would like wedding-cake to dream on, and the dreams are always better if the bride or the groom sends the cake."

Mr. Kennett laughed. "You are nothing but a pack-horse for those boys, Aunt Marshall," said he, at the same time filling her bag.

"Ah! Ralp'y, there is but one time to be young," said the old lady.

"Aunt Marshall is a heathen," said Mr. Kennett; "she does not actually bow down to wood and stone, but she reverences the goddess Juventas."

"It is better, Mrs. Marshall," said Mr. Fletcher, with a grave smile, "than the worship of Plutus, to which the old are, generally, more inclined."

"I am sure I don't know what you and Ralp' mean with your gods and goddesses," said Mrs. Marshall, good-naturally; "but I know the boys would like the cake." And she drew the strings of her bag together and tied them firmly.

Harry watched her elderly hero and heroine as closely as politeness would permit, and yet no sign could she discover of that feeling which pervaded the little red book. She was utterly unconscious, the while, that Mrs. Brittain was closely watching her, and that lady's silent comment was,

"Well, if she likes Sylvio, it must be owned she does not show it."

And then she sighed. How severe she would have been if she could have detected in Harry the slightest attempt to attract her son.

Just before she left, Miss Theresa leaned over Harry's chair, and said to her,

"I have a note for you, my dear, from one of your admirers."

Mr. Brittain was immediately interested.

"From whom?" said Harry, fearing it was from Richard, and hoping that Miss Theresa would not give it to her then.

"It is from Davy," said Miss Theresa, handing her a somewhat soiled little paper, covered with the uncouth characters of a child.

Harry laughed as she read the ill-spelled invitation to go chestnut-hunting the next afternoon.

DEIB HARRY — I knows a big tree in Dinny's woods tother sider Nick Bane house I ainter fraider Nick now 1 bit lets go

DAVY PONESET.

P. S. I rote this al by miself.

"Oh, is not this a funny little note?" cried Harry. "Just read it, Mr. Brittain, I must write and accept such a polite invitation. Where can I get a piece of paper?"

Mr. Brittain pulled out his memorandum book and tore out a leaf; but as he did so, out fell the identical little note which he had dropped once before by the tomb of Anthony Fletcher. Harry had forgotten all about it, but she recognized it the instant she saw it, and it filled her with a vague alarm. This time she did not stoop to pick it up, nor could she resist the temptation to look at him. He colored as he replaced it in his book, but he smiled also.

Harry's answer was written and handed to Miss Theresa, just as Mrs. Brittain appeared bonneted and shawled to say that she was ready to go. Mr. Fletcher attended them to the carriage, and Harry whispered to Mr. Brittain,

"Don't you think it will come to pass?"

"What?"

"That Miss Theresa and Mr. Fletcher will be married at last."

Mr. Brittain smiled.

"But you know there can be no harm to wish it."

"Are you sure you have cake enough for all those boys, Aunt Marshall?" said Mr. Kennett.

"Oh! plenty, Ralp'; it does not take much, you know, to bring about a dream. It takes mighty little to make pleasant feelings, and I do like the boys, there is no denying it. They are a little wild now and then, but they are not bad; nobody can be really bad as long as there is one soul in the world to think well of one, so I make it a principle to love all my boys."

"Aunt Marshall could not hate anybody to save her life, and hard must be the heart that could not love her," said Mr. Kennett, when she was gone.

Dinnie's Wood was a tract of some extent, enclosed by a high rail-fence, but its beautiful growth of oak and chestnut, with here and there a pine, its sunny glades and sloping hills, made it so inviting a ramble that some enterprising lover of the woods had asked and obtained permission to build a flight of rough steps over the fence, and by way of ornament, a pagoda-like roof was raised over the steps, to form a shelter from the rain, or a pleasant loitering-place, where the idler might enjoy the varied landscape of field and grove spread out before him. Beautiful as were these woods, they were more the resort of squirrel-hunting boys than of the young men and maidens of Netherford, and, as it was not Saturday nor vacation, Harry and Davy ran no risk of encountering any one in their expedition. It was not altogether an unknown land to Harry, though she had never explored as far as the famous chestnut tree which Davy praised. That little pioneer was for pushing straight ahead, but Harry paused almost at every step to admire the Autumn in his glory. The soft, dreamy sunlight, the floating leaves, the rabbit starting from his burrow, or the nimble-footed squirrel, scampering from bough to bough, were more to her than all the chestnuts in the woods. She pulled off her hat and sat down upon an old log.

"Oh! do come on!" said Davy, "you so lazy."

"Oh, Davy! it is so pretty here, let us wait a little while."

"It's a sight prettier at the tree," said Davy, pulling her by the hand. And so they pursued their way for some little distance, until at last Davy shouted,

"Yonder is the tree! Whoopee! just look at the bustin'

chestnuts on the grass! I 'spec' it must have blowed hard here last night."

They dropped their baskets on the ground, and applied themselves to the task of beating out the polished nuts

"There's a many a chestnut and chincapin in these here woods," said Davy, "and we can get a heap 'fore dark." Then as he saw what very slow progress Harry was making in divesting the chestnuts of their bristling burs, he exclaimed impatiently, "But you aint going to have many if you don't make haste."

"That is true, Davy," said Harry, laughing; "I am afraid I will not carry many home unless I had some one to help me. Don't you wish some kind Fairy would walk up and offer her assistance?"

"Yonder comes somebody, now," said Davy, peering about; "but it aint no fairy. No—yes—yes, it is a man. Oh, pshaw! I wish he'd stay away."

It was Mr. Brittain, Harry saw at a glance, and she worked so desperately at the chestnuts that she wounded her fingers with the thorns.

"What you come here for?" said Davy, ungraciously, as soon as Mr. Brittain was within hearing.

Harry looked up and smiled.

"I have gathered chestnuts in these woods, Davy, long before you ever did," said Mr. Brittain, with his eyes fixed on Harry.

"Hum!" said Davy; "I reckon you did; you's a heap bigger'n me."

"And it was because I knew you were such a little boy that I came here to help you."

Davy's good humor was instantly restored. "Well, I'm mighty glad," said he, "for Harry aint much account."

"Did you come for that?" asked Harry, thinking how good he was, yet nevertheless with a latent suspicion that the correct Mr. Brittain was not telling the truth.

He smiled as he threw two or three chestnuts into her basket, and said,

"No; I came to meet you."

Again Harry's fingers went to work with the chestnut-burs, while Davy cried out,

"You aint a helpin' me!" and immediately, with the volatility of a child, went to seek a chincapin tree not far off.

Harry rose to follow, but a hand was laid upon the skirt

of her dress ; turning, she met Mr. Brittain's eyes, and, unable to stand their gaze, she bashfully looked down.

"Stay with me," he said ; "here is a seat."

Harry sat down. "The languid air did swoon." Far off the call of clamorous crows and jays came like sounds in a dream. Happy she was, and yet afraid, and so she sat with her little white fingers torturing each other until one of Mr. Brittain's strong hands made them prisoners.

"Harry," he said, "I could not forget you ; I did not try."

"Ah !" thought Harry, "what shall I say to him, he is so wise, and so learned, and so good, and I am such a silly little thing ?"

But he did not seem to expect her to say anything just then. "Wherever I have been," he went on, "since that night we parted at your uncle's gate, you have been more present to me than all else ; have you not thought of me once ? I love you indeed, better than I did that night, do you like me less, or — do you love me — a little ?"

Harry saw he was waiting for an answer now, and so she said very foolishly and very faintly, "I don't know," but she did not take away her hands ; somehow they were very cold, and Mr. Brittain's was very warm.

"Ah ! Harry," he said, "you knew well enough when you did not love me," and Harry smiled. "I want a better answer than that."

"I don't know what to say," said Harry.

"Harry, if you love me, you will say so ; you will not keep me in suspense."

"Oh, goodness !" thought Harry, "why does not he ask me again, right out ? I can't make up the whole answer all by myself."

"You two aint a workin !" cried Davy, from the bottom of the slope ; and Harry jumped up and ran for her basket. Mr. Brittain smiled and followed. Once as she slipped on the smooth grass he caught her hand and would not let it go.

"Dear Harry ! I love you," he whispered.

But Harry only laughed and shook her head ; they were too near to Davy, she thought, to indulge in such expressions.

Poor Davy could get but little aid from them, and at last in a pet he snatched up his basket, saying,



“This aint no sort o’ fun; let’s go home!”

The two grown children were quite at his bidding; once more they turned toward the quaint stile, but ere her feet might tread the downward steps, Mr. Brittain laid his hand upon her arm, and said, with something of sternness in his look,

“Harry, you are no more a child; you are a woman. You must not leave me in doubt; tell me truly, before you leave this place.”

“Ah! do not be angry!” said Harry.

“Angry? no, no; but be not you unkind. I love you well; will you love me?”

Harry looked around. Davy still lingered in the distance, loth to leave the plentiful harvest scattered on the ground, and certain there was none to hear, she said very timidly, “Yes,” covered her face with her hands and sat down upon the topmost step.

“We will wait here for Davy,” said Mr. Brittain, seating himself beside her. But he was presently tired of waiting for a sight of her face; he took her hands away, and one of them he kept fast in his own.

No more words were needed, and they sat and waited for Davy, little caring how long he tarried, and fearing no intruders; for the unfrequented road which bordered the wood was rarely travelled at that hour; even those who sought Nick Bayne’s cottage, generally pursued a path through the fields. And Nick Bayne had many visitors. As the sexton of St. Botolf’s he was an object of special interest to all that congregation, and now that his elderly daughter Amy had been ill for a week, the path through the fields was trod oftener than ever.

But Mrs. Brittain never liked by-ways; she always preferred going round Four-Oaks, and down the old, unused road, to crossing the fields, and she was one of the best friends that Amy Bayne had. That very afternoon she had taken old Charlotte with her to see Amy, and had accomplished many little odd jobs for the invalid mistress of the cottage.

“The remembrance of a good deed is like balm to the soul.” But Mrs. Brittain as she walked forth from the cottage, was not soothing her soul with the remembrance of the good she had done. She had sent Charlotte home by the fields that she might see about supper, and as she leisurely

picked her way around the drifts of dead leaves in the old road, she was thinking of Sylvo and Harry. She had thought of them very much of late, and often did she picture them before her with all the vividness of reality.

Neither Harry nor Mr. Brittain saw her approaching on the other side of the way. There was a lovely, quiet little landscape spread out before them; Nick Bayne's cottage embowered in trees; beyond, a hilly field, with cattle sprinkled about; the gorgeous tints of autumn on the woods, and the fading sunlight over all; but they saw nothing of it. He looked at her, and she looked down, so quiet and still that when some sudden impulse made Mrs. Brittain look up, she rubbed her eyes and looked again to assure herself that it was no vision. A light wind dallied with Harry's scarlet scarf which blazed against her dress of sober gray, and Sylvo was looking at her still, for,

"Music in his ears his beating heart did make,"

and he cared not to move. Mrs. Brittain rubbed her eyes; was it a vision? No; for at that moment little Davy came rushing furiously over the steps. With arms outstretched, bearing his basket aloft, he broke through the barrier of clasped hands, saying, angrily,

"Next time I goes for chestnuts I goes with boys!"

"Walk home with me, Davy," said Mrs. Brittain, pretending not to see her son and Miss Vane. She could not trust herself to speak to them, for, poor old lady, she felt much more as if she had lost a son than as if she had gained a daughter. Harry's tender heart made her comprehend this quicker than Mr. Brittain; for when he said,

"Poor little Davy! we have offended him; what shall we do to make amends?"

"A picture-book, or a few sugar-plums will make it all right with him," she replied, and then added, after a little hesitation, "but what will your mother feel about this?"

Mr. Brittain had not permitted himself to think of his mother's feelings; he was almost irritated now at being obliged to think of them, but yet it seemed impossible that his mother could longer cherish a prejudice against Harry.

"She will be sure to love you," he said.

"Yes," said Harry, simply, "I know she will."


Nevertheless, while Mr. Brittain silently marvelled at the

faith and charity her words embodied, she was deciding upon the means to propitiate the child "of a larger growth," who could not be appeased by picture-books and sugar-plums.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### MRS. BRITTAİN'S LAST TEAR.

AVY walked home with Mrs. Brittain, by the Mainway, with a dim impression that something had happened of too serious a nature to admit of questions. He clung with a half unconscious sympathy, to the hand of the companion Providence had sent him in the hour of need, and glanced occasionally with timid awe into her face, when the useful handkerchief came into play.

Meanwhile the pair of lovers who had occasioned this extraordinary state of things proceeded by the North Lane very soberly to Fanning House, and long after Davy was asleep and Mrs. Brittain had subsided into a state of tearless apathy, Mr. Brittain continued to discourse eloquently to Mr. and Mrs. Fanning. Harry would not stay to hear the discussion; she knew well enough that her aunt would offer objections — as indeed she did, but as Mr. Brittain had Mr. Fanning on his side they were finally overruled. In vain did Mrs. Fanning plead Harry's youth, Mr. Fanning called to mind no fewer than four nieces who had married at Harry's age, and done well. In vain did she urge that Harry was so impulsive it was impossible to say when she knew her own mind; Mr. Fanning brought such strong proof to the contrary that she was at length obliged to yield a gracious consent. And we may be very sure that her manner in so doing atoned for the objections she had advanced, for Mrs. Fanning would have made any sacrifice

of her feelings rather than appear to yield an unwilling consent to this match which, though none of her making, might prove a good one nevertheless. She declared Mr. Brittain to be her own choice and tried to think so, though she did feel a lingering regret for the hopes now departed forever.

The momentous interview being over, Mr. Brittain hastened home to assure his mother that there was no excuse for tears, and Fanning House was left in a state of excitement which gradually extended to the youngest servant in the establishment and lasted until Lonely Tony was set ringing for Harry's wedding. Mrs. Fanning was in her element; the management of weddings was certainly her vocation, and the excitement and bustle incident to such occasions relieved in a measure the disappointment she felt in Harry's choice. Fanning House underwent such a thorough renovation that one might have thought it had been visited by a pestilence. As to Miss Harry, she was passive in her aunt's hands. "Poor auntie!" she thought, "I have not pleased her in all things, I am afraid; I am sure I want her to have her own way at last about my wedding." And so she gave up the intention she had once formed of following her mother's example, and consented to be married with all the show and grandeur her aunt could devise. And Mrs. Fanning ordered the bridal wardrobe, and prepared such stores of good things that Mr. Fanning was never weary of perpetrating dull, good-natured jokes about his being a ruined man.

Sufficient time elapsed before the important event, for all those who had anything to say to the contrary to speak their minds, and we all know that this is a privilege the human family cannot forego. Old Judy disapproved decidedly; Mr. Middleton's splendor had dazzled her eyes. She thought Mr. Brittain a very nice gentleman and a very excellent man, but he wasn't "by no means as pretty as Mr. Middleton, and he hadn't a kerridge and hosses to ride Miss Harry 'bout in." She thought him moreover, too old and grave for Miss Harry, though it must be acknowledged that a carriage and horses would have added to his good looks and subtracted from his age in Judy's eyes, for she was proverbially mercenary. As he lacked these essential possessions Judy did not restrain herself in the expression, of an opinion founded upon his gravity and his "age," that Mr. Brittain she was afraid could not "*feel in common* with

Miss Harry, and might end in breaking her heart." Whereat Harry would fly into a passion and upbraid Judy so unmercifully that that privileged domestic was constrained to declare she thought Miss Harry no more "fitten" for Mr. Brittain than he was "fitten" for her; a declaration which never failed to mollify Harry.

But when she told Judy's remarkable verdict to Mr. Brittain it did not amuse him as much as she had expected; he did not laugh, and the smile which he forced scarcely satisfied her. Truth to tell, Mrs. Brittain was of Judy's opinion, and though she expressed her sentiments in more becoming language she expressed them quite as decidedly. The vision of Harry and Sylvo upon the steps in the wood was sufficient assurance to her of the state of affairs between them, and she was quite prepared for the confession her son made to her that night. She gained a mighty victory over herself and smiled satisfaction in his presence, but when alone she mourned and wept at the terrifying thought, Suppose it should not turn out well? This was the unanswerable, awful question that always hung about Sylvo's wedding day, and would have stared her in the face none the less pertinaciously had the bride been of her own choosing. The effort to answer a question which time alone could solve left its ravages upon the anxious lady's face, and her son could not be blind to her dejection, neither could he withhold an inquiry as to the cause of her sadness of countenance.

"Oh Sylvo! you are hardly suited to her or she to you!" cried the foreboding lady.

It was not in Mr. Brittain's nature to fly into a passion like Harry, and so he allowed his mother's state of mind to make him very unhappy, which perhaps was the wisest course he could have pursued, for it made her really anxious to possess the affection of the girl who had won the heart of her incomparable Sylvo. Nevertheless she was not easy in her mind about the future, which had always been to her a Land of Threats, and not of Promise. And then the zeal with which Mrs. Fanning undertook the preparation for the wedding-feast was very aggravating; it was such a triumph long-drawn-out. Would it have relieved her mind to know that Mrs. Fanning was not particularly elated with the match? That lady could not always turn a deaf ear to the objections Judy so plaintively poured forth, and she

went about her preparations, not exactly sorrowing, but rather disappointed. When, however, the engagement was made known, and every one expressed surprise that Harry should have captivated such a man as Mr. Brittain, Mrs. Fanning took comfort, but poor Mrs. Brittain lost heart.

"Harry has really done better than I supposed," thought Mrs. Fanning, as she listened to Mr. Brittain's praises.

"Ah, me!" thought his mother, "there was never any one worthy of him;" and she dropped a tear each day.

And poor little Davy! what amends did the two lovers make for their unpardonable neglect? Harry easily obtained forgiveness; but when it was whispered Davy that his rival was going to marry her he was very wroth with Mr. Brittain. He knit his little brows and looked daggers at the mere mention of his name. But fierce as was his indignation it entirely subsided when there came, one morning, a white envelop, tied with a white riband and directed to Master Davy Poinsett, in Harry's own handwriting — a marvellous missive that looked to Davy like a summons to Faëry Land: and very proud was he to have a card all to himself instead of being included in the general invitation to the Poinsett Family.

And the wedding was as grand as Mrs. Fanning, or even Judy could desire. Nick Bayne gave Lonely Tony a merciless thumping, and Mr. Sutton made "the pealing organ blow." Mr. Fanning rubbed his hands with great satisfaction when he gave away the bride, and was a diligent promoter of the festivities afterwards. Little Davy was there in a bewilderment of delight, and he was the fortunate hero whose slice of cake contained the ring. How his eyes glistened as it clinked on his plate! And Davy to this day, now as smart and dandified a young beau as any of those who danced with Harry at the Junior's Party, cherishes that ring as his chief treasure. You may see it at any time dangling from a watch-guard made of Mrs. Fletcher's hair.

After the wedding came dinners and parties innumerable, so that it was long before Mrs. Sylvo Brittain settled in her new home to her domestic occupations. As she was the admired of all beholders at the various entertainments given in her honor, the anxious mother of Sylvo, who was growing quite proud of her pretty daughter, began to entertain very serious fears lest her son's wife should prove a married belle. She brooded over this agonizing thought many long

hours, sitting lonely at home, while Harry was dancing away under Sylvo's admiring gaze.

Meanwhile home came Miss Grace from her visit to Mrs. Middleton. She gave what her sister Emily called a *thrilling* description of the magnificent mansion of the Middletons; and while Mr. Kennett hinted about a creative fancy, Mrs. Fanning believed and sighed. The excitement and novelty of the wedding were over by this time, and Mrs. Fanning was suffering from the reaction consequent upon her exertions. Harry had taken very kindly to domestic affairs, to everybody's great surprise, and *Madame Brittain mère*, as Miss Edna called that lady, was very fond of her. She sighed sometimes, it is true, when Harry showed her astounding ignorance of housekeeping, but she had hopes that she would improve. She did not like to see Sylvo ruining his digestion over the extraordinary dishes Harry compounded for him, she was very angry with Mrs. Fanning for praising them, and in her secret soul she thought her son weak-minded because he praised them too.

Grace Innabee's account of the Middleton Establishment renewed Mrs. Fanning's regrets for the splendid alliances Harry might have made. She was never weary of hearing Miss Grace describe the glories of Valhalla, as Mr. Middleton called his place, although every rehearsal strengthened her regrets. Let us not judge her harshly: how many of us are given to speculating upon that profitless topic, "it might have been." Harry's pretty little home looked painfully poor and plain to her after Miss Grace's gorgeous description of a mansion over which her favorite niece might have presided. Mr. Brittain had taken his wife to live with his mother, for the house belonged to her, and she had spared no expense to render it worthy a bride, and Sylvo's bride! Harry thought her home perfection, and Mr. Fanning thought it the cosiest place in the world in which to pass away the evening; but Mrs. Fanning's eyes were dazzled by Valhalla, and she could not discover the charms Harry and her uncle found in that old-fashioned house, and Mrs. Brittain's various improvements made very little impression upon her.

But, to do her justice, she kept her regrets to herself, though often sorely tempted to let Mrs. Brittain know in a polite and playful manner, what magnificence Harry had resigned for her son. There was little danger, however, that

she would yield to this temptation, for if delicacy did not forbid, Mrs. Brittain's proclivity to tears was not unknown to her, and Mrs. Fanning had a well-bred horror of a scene. But Miss Grace Innibee was not troubled with delicacy, and she had no particular horror of a scene; or, we should more correctly say, she was rather obtuse, and as she could entertain at that time no thought unconnected with Valhalla, she expatiated as usual upon the glories of Mr. Middleton's princely mansion when she came to visit Harry. Mrs. Fanning was present upon that occasion, and Miss Grace with the view of flattering her, dwelt, Mrs. Brittain thought, in a very disagreeable manner upon the fact that Harry might have been mistress of all that grandeur. Miss Grace's visit resulted in incalculable good to all who enjoyed the pleasure of her society that afternoon. To her alone is due the honor of reconciling Mrs. Brittain and Mrs. Fanning to a match which each was ready to accuse the other of having made.

Miss Grace had been rehearsing the catalogue of mirrors and carpets, and pictures, and silver, and china, at some length, when, turning suddenly to Harry, she closed the list by exclaiming,

"And, Harry, if all this is not enough to make you repent your bargain, there is a most magnificent piano; it cost upwards of a thousand dollars. You might have been playing on that piano now."

The gloom began to gather on Mrs. Brittain's brow; she never had liked that Grace Innibee, never; neither had Mrs. Fanning, but that gracious lady smiled benignly upon her. As for Harry she sat serenely, and simply said she had seen a great many very good pianos which cost far less.

"La! child!" cried Miss Grace, "you can't mean to say you like your piano, though a very good one I admit, better than that?"

"Yes, I do," said Harry; "I like it a great deal better."

"Just listen to that!" cried Miss Grace, derisively; "Mrs. Brittain I am afraid these are sour grapes."

Mrs. Brittain tossed her head haughtily, while Mrs. Fanning gave a little pleasant laugh. Mrs. Brittain's feelings were far the more virtuous — but there is so much in manner.

"That piano was made to order," continued Miss Grace, "as indeed all the furniture in his house was made expressly for him. Mr. Middleton sent to Paris for almost everything; he has such a fastidious soul" —



"A soul!" cried Harry, opening wide her brown eyes, "where did he buy that?"

Mrs. Brittain burst into an hysterical laugh.

"Why Harry!" cried Mrs. Fanning reprovingly, while Miss Grace was too astonished to proceed.

"Well," cried Harry, not at all checked by her aunt's exclamation, nor even by Mr. Brittain's hand, which was laid upon her own, "well, I know he did not have one when he was here."

"What a queer creature!" cried Miss Grace, half inclined to think Harry was making fun of her. "What does she mean?"

"I mean what I say," said Harry, promptly.

"Nonsense, Harry!" said Miss Grace sharply, "you need not pretend indifference; you know you have a taste for magnificence."

"Yes," said Harry coolly, "I know I have."

Mrs. Brittain had been regarding her daughter-in-law with great satisfaction; it seemed to her that Harry was fighting her battles, but this cool rejoinder was something of a shock.

"You know you would enjoy all these things too if you had them; come now, Harry, confess, would you not?" said Miss Grace.

"Ah, indeed I would!" said Harry.

Mrs. Brittain applied her handkerchief stealthily to her eyes.

"Harry, you are carrying this joke too far," said Mr. Brittain, gravely.

"No, it is not a joke," said Harry, with great simplicity; "I am in earnest; I do like magnificence. I like carpets that the foot can sink down in, and I like mirrors and statues, and pictures, and marble halls, and such things, and incense, and a brass band always playing in a fairy-like garden."

Miss Grace hardly knew what to think of this speech. "Dear me, Mr. Brittain," said she, "I am afraid Harry is very extravagant in her tastes; though to be sure one might furnish a house very elegantly at one fifth the cost of Mr. Middleton's. But if you do induce Mr. Brittain to refurnish, Harry, my dear," continued she, rising to take leave, "I advise you to pay Mrs. Middleton, Sallie, you know, a visit and examine hers; you would get a good many new notions from her. Mrs. Fanning, if I were you, I would make Harry

go there this summer or fall." And with this parting advice Miss Grace withdrew, leaving Mrs. Fanning uncertain if she were pleased or displeased, while Mrs. Brittain felt her heart burning within her. Mr. Brittain, however, thought he had arrived, by the help of Miss Grace's closing remarks, at a true understanding of Harry's enumeration of things she liked.

"We cannot have marble halls, and statues, and such things here, Harry," said he, somewhat sadly, in spite of himself.

"No," said Harry, shaking her head, "nor a brass band."

"Mrs. Brittain darted a pitying glance at her son, and shed tears openly.

"Harry, you are talking nonsense," said Mrs. Fanning, who hated a scene.

"No indeed, Aunt Eleanor, I leave nonsense for Grace Innibee, only the next time she comes here with her Arabian Nights Entertainment I will thank her to call me Mrs. Brittain."

"But Harry we can have new furniture here," said Mr. Brittain, half laughing. He still persisted in thinking that Harry had some wishes ungratified.

"You shan't do it!" said Harry, almost angrily. "I love these old things! I would not see them supplanted by any new furniture for anything in the world. Your mother told me that you learned to walk around these chairs, and that you used to look at yourself when you had a new jacket in those old side-board doors. Do you think, sir, any other side-board could look as pretty to me?"

"Ah Harry! you will be romantic to your dying day," said her aunt.

"But we will put new paper on the walls, Harry," said Mr. Brittain, taking possession of her hands.

Now these very walls were Harry's especial admiration, for the uncouth representations of the Pilgrim's Progress from this world to that which is to come, had been Mr. Brittain's first picture book, and none of Mr. Middleton's elegant frescoes could have had such a charm for her as this old-fashioned papering.

"If you do I will run away and leave you. Why should you wish to do so destructive a thing?"

"You know you said you loved magnificence, and" —

"I did not!" said Harry, "I said I *liked* magnificence.

Have you yet to learn the difference between the two words? I like all those grand things with my eyes, but when it comes to loving, that is quite another thing."

Mrs. Brittain removed her handkerchief, thereby revealing a pair of very red eyes, and said,

"My child, I just begin to understand you."

"Yes," said Mrs. Fanning, "with all her romance, Harry has a great deal of sense, and one really cannot help loving her."

For once Mrs. Brittain cordially agreed with Mrs. Fanning, and she crossed the room to embrace her daughter-in-law in token of her thorough assent to that lady's remark; but somebody's else arms had made a prisoner of Harry before she could reach her, and she was obliged to sink into a chair.

"Let me go!" said Harry, laughing, "you want me to tell you I love you, and I do not at all." And then she said, in a whisper which she did not think Mrs. Brittain could hear, "That is a big story!"

There was a peculiar beauty in Mrs. Brittain's tears; they flowed as readily for joy as for sorrow, but tears of joy are more quickly checked. She drew forth her handkerchief and wiped away the last tear she ever shed over Sylvo's matrimonial prospects, while Mrs. Fanning went home quite satisfied that Harry was, after all, the best judge of what would contribute to her own happiness.

BRILL-ON-THE-HILL.

*Alabama, 1867.*



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